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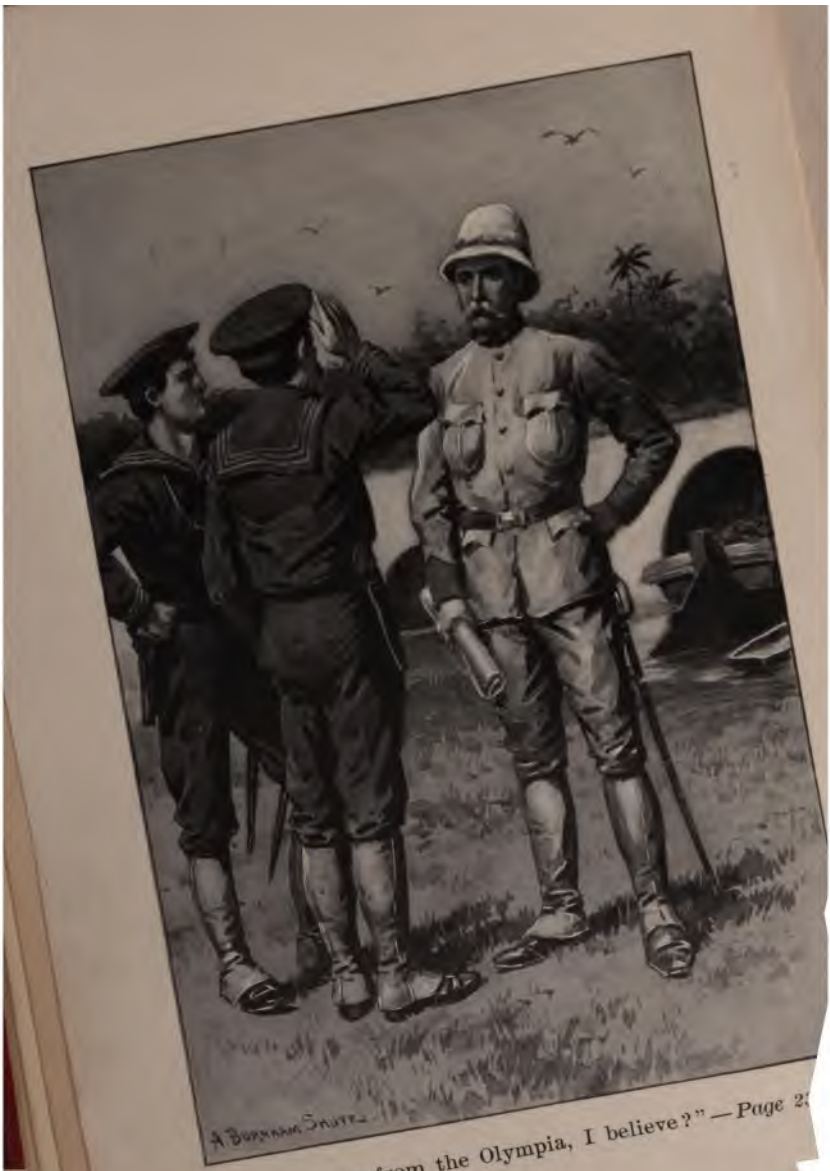

"You are from the Olympia, I believe?" — *Page 2*

DRAGON LUZON

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BOSTON
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1950

"You are from the Olympia. I believe

Old Glory Series

THE CAMPAIGN OF THE JUNGLE

OR

UNDER LAWTON THROUGH LUZON

BY

EDWARD STRATEMEYER

AUTHOR OF "UNDER DEWEY AT MANILA," "A YOUNG VOLUNTEER IN CUBA," "FIGHTING IN CUBAN WATERS," "UNDER OTIS IN THE PHILIPPINES," "TO ALASKA FOR GOLD" "RICHARD DARE'S VENTURE," "OLIVER BRIGHT'S SEARCH," ETC.

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The Campaign of the Jungle.

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PREFACE

"THE CAMPAIGN OF THE JUNGLE" is a complete story in itself, but forms the fifth volume of the "Old Glory Series," a line of tales depicting life and adventure in our army and navy of to-day.

The heroes of these various stories are the three Russell brothers, Larry, Walter, and Ben. In the first volume we told of Larry's adventures while "Under Dewey at Manila," in the second and fourth we followed Ben as "A Young Volunteer in Cuba" and during the opening campaign "Under Otis in the Philippines," while in the third tale we saw what Walter could do "Fighting in Cuban Waters."

In the present volume the reader is asked to follow the fortunes of both Larry and Ben in two important expeditions of that gallant soldier, General Henry W. Lawton, the first directed against Santa Cruz on the Laguna de Bay, where the insurgents were left badly scattered, and the second from Manila to San Isidro, a winding advance of about one hundred and fifty miles through the jungle,

which took twenty days to complete, and during which time twenty-two battles were fought and twenty-eight towns were captured, along with large quantities of army stores and the like. This latter expedition was one of the most daring of its kind, and could not have been pushed to success had not the man at its head been what he was, a trained Indian fighter of our own West, and one whose nerve and courage were almost beyond comprehension. Small wonder it was that when, later on, General Lawton was killed on the firing line, General Otis cabled, "Great loss to us and to his country."

As in the previous volumes of this series, the author has endeavored to be as accurate, historically, as possible, and for this reason has examined the reports of the officers high in command, as well as listened to many tales related by the returning soldiers themselves. It is therefore hoped that if any errors have crept in they may not be of sufficient magnitude to hurt the general usefulness of the work from an historical standpoint. As a story of adventure, the writer trusts it will find equal favor with those that have preceded it in the series.

EDWARD STRATEMEYER.

NEWARK, N. J.,
March 1, 1900.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Dismaying News	1
II.	Something about the Situation at Malolos	10
III.	An Adventure on the Pasig River	20
IV.	The Gap in the Firing Line	30
V.	An Encounter at the River	41
VI.	In which Luke Striker is Wounded	52
VII.	The Retreat to the Rice-house	61
VIII.	A Prisoner of the Filipinos	70
IX.	The Advance into the Jungle	81
X.	The Taking of Angat	91
XI.	The Crossing of the Rio Grande River	101
XII.	Something about a Poisoned Well	112
XIII.	In which a Flag of Truce is fired Upon	122
XIV.	Surrounded by the Enemy	132
XV.	The Escape from the Burning House	141
XVI.	News from Home	150
XVII.	In and out of a Strange Pitfall	160
XVIII.	The Adventure at the Mill-house	169

CHAPTER		PAGE
XIX.	News of Larry	179
XX.	The Advance upon Maasin	189
XXI.	Camping over a Powder Magazine	199
XXII.	The Result of an Ambush	208
XXIII.	The Tornado in the Cane-brake	218
XXIV.	The Flight for Liberty	227
XXV.	The Caves under the Mountain	235
XXVI.	Boxer the Scout	244
XXVII.	The Departure of the *Olympia*	257
XXVIII.	The Advance upon San Isidro	267
XXIX.	Larry is sentenced to be Shot	280
XXX.	A Rescue under Difficulties	292
XXXI.	The Fall of San Isidro — Conclusion	305

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

"'You are from the *Olympia*, I believe?'" . *Frontispiece*

PAGE

"'Alto!' came the sudden cry" 47

"'Hullo, sailor, where did you come from?'" . . . 82

"'The well is poisoned! don't drink! it will kill you!'" . 115

"His sword kept the two Tagals back" 147

"'Can you hold on a few minutes longer?'" . . . 173

"On they plodded, up an incline that seemed to have no end" 236

"Down went the sapling over the edge of the cliff" . 281

THE CAMPAIGN OF THE JUNGLE

CHAPTER I

DISMAYING NEWS

"How are you feeling to-day, Ben?"

"Fairly good, Larry. If it wasn't for this awfully hot weather, the wound wouldn't bother me at all. The doctor says that if I continue to improve as I have, I can rejoin my company by the middle of next week."

"You mustn't hurry matters. You did enough fighting at Caloocan, Malabon, Polo, and here, to last you for some time. Let the other fellows have a share of it." And Larry Russell smiled grimly as he bent over his elder brother and grasped the hand that was thrust forward.

"I am willing the other fellows should have their share of the fighting, Larry. But you must remem-

ber that now Captain Larchmore is dead, and Lieutenant Ross is down with the fever, there is nobody to command our company but me — unless, of course, Sergeant Gilmore takes charge."

"Then let Gilmore play captain for a while, while you take the rest you have so well earned. Why, you've been working like a steam-engine ever since you landed in Luzon. Gilbert Pennington says he never dreamed there was so much fight in you, and predicts that you'll come out a brigadier general by the time Aguinaldo and his army are defeated."

"Well, I believe in pushing things," responded Ben Russell, smiling more broadly than ever, as his mind wandered back to that fierce attack on Malolos, where he had received the bullet wound in the side. "If we can only keep the insurgents on the run, we'll soon make them throw down their arms. But tell me about yourself, Larry. What have you been doing since you were up here last?"

"Oh, I've been putting in most of my time on board the *Olympia*, as usual," replied the young tar. "About all we are doing is to nose around any strange vessels that come into the harbor. Since the outbreak in Manila last February, the navy has had next to nothing to do, and I'm thinking strongly

of asking to be transferred to the marines at Cavite, or elsewhere."

"I don't blame you." Ben Russell paused. "Have you heard anything more about Braxton Bogg and that hundred and forty thousand dollars he said he had left hidden in Benedicto Lupez's house in Manila?"

A shade of anxiety crossed Larry Russell's face. "Yes, I've heard a good deal — more than I wanted to, Ben. But I wasn't going to speak of it, for fear of adding to your worry and making you feel worse."

"Why, Larry, you don't mean — Has Braxton Bogg escaped from jail and got hold of the money again?"

"No, Braxton Bogg is still in prison at Manila, although the Buffalo bank officials are about to have him returned to the United States for trial. But the money has disappeared. The police authorities at Manila went to Benedicto Lupez's house, to find it locked up and deserted. They broke in and made a search, but they couldn't find a dollar, either in Spanish or American money, although they did find Braxton Bogg's valise and a dozen or more printed bands of the Hearthstone

Saving Institution — the kind of bands they put around five-hundred-dollar and one-thousand-dollar packages of bills."

"Then this Spaniard found where Bogg had hidden the money and made off with it?"

"That is the supposition; and I reckon it's about right, too. Of course, it may be possible that Braxton Bogg never left the stolen money in Lupez's house, although he swears he did. He says Lupez was an old friend of his and was going to have the bills changed into Spanish money for him, so that Bogg could use the cash without being suspected of any wrong-doing."

"It's too bad; and just as we thought our fifteen or sixteen thousand dollars of the amount was safe. I wonder what the bank people at home will say now."

"Of course, they won't like it. They would rather have the money than their missing cashier; and I would rather have the money, too — not but that Braxton Bogg ought to be punished for his crimes."

"Yes, Larry, Braxton Bogg deserves all the law can give him, for the depositors in the Hearthstone Saving Institution were mostly poor, hard-working

persons, and the wrecking of the bank meant untold hardships for them." The wounded brother sighed deeply. "If that money isn't recovered, we'll be as badly off as we were when we first came to Manila," he concluded.

Ben Russell was the eldest of three brothers, Walter coming next, and Larry being the youngest. They were orphans, and at the death of their widowed mother had been left in the care of their uncle, Job Dowling, a miserly man whose chief aim in life had been to hoard money, no matter at what cost, so long as his method was within the limit of the law.

The boys were all sturdy and had been used to a good home, and Job Dowling's harsh and dictatorial manner cut them to the quick. A clash between guardian and wards had resulted in the running away of the three youths, and the guardian had tried in vain to bring them back. Larry had drifted to San Francisco and shipped on a merchantman bound for China. He had become a castaway and been picked up by the Asiatic Squadron of the United States Navy. This was just at the time of the outbreak of the war with Spain, and how gallantly the young tar served his coun-

try has already been told in detail in "Under Dewey at Manila."

Ben had found his way to New York, and Walter had drifted to Boston. After several adventures, the war fever had caught both, and Ben had joined the army to become "A Young Volunteer in Cuba," as already related in the volume of that name, while Walter had joined the armored cruiser *Brooklyn* and participated in the destruction of the Spanish fleet in Santiago Bay, as told in "Fighting in Cuban Waters."

While the three boys were away from home, Job Dowling had overreached himself by trying to sell some of the Russell heirlooms which it had been willed the lads should keep. The heirlooms had been stolen by a sharper, and it had cost the old man a neat sum of money to get them back. The experience made him both a sadder and a wiser man, and from that time on his manner changed, and when the boys returned from the war they found that he had turned over a new leaf. In the future he was perfectly willing that they should "do fer themselves," as he expressed it.

After a brief stay in Buffalo, Walter had left, to rejoin the *Brooklyn*, which was bound for a cruise

to Jamaica and elsewhere. At this time trouble began to break out between the United States troops in the Philippines and the insurgents who had been fighting the now-conquered Spaniards, and it looked as if another fair-sized war was at hand. This being so, Ben lost no time in reënlisting in the army, while Larry hastened to join Admiral Dewey's flagship *Olympia* once more. "If there's to be any more fighting, I want to be right in it," was what the young tar said, and Ben agreed with him. How they journeyed to Manila by way of the Mediterranean, the Suez Canal, and the Indian Ocean, has already been related in "Under Otis in the Philippines." Ben was at this time second lieutenant of Company D of his regiment. With the two boys went Gilbert Pennington, Ben's old friend of the Rough Riders, who was now first sergeant of Company B of the same regiment, and half a dozen others who had fought with the young volunteer in Cuba. On arriving at Manila Larry found matters, so far as it concerned his ship, very quiet, but Ben was at once sent to the front, and participated with much honor to himself in the campaign which led to the fall of Malolos, a city that was at that time the rebel capital. As Company D, with Ben at its head as acting

captain, had rushed down the main street of the place, an insurgent sharpshooter had hit the young commander in the side, and he had fallen, to be picked up later and placed in the temporary hospital which was opened up in Malolos as soon as it was made certain that the rebels had been thoroughly cleaned out. Fortunately for the young volunteer the wound, though painful, was not serious.

Of the fifteen thousand to twenty thousand dollars coming to the Russell brothers, more than three-quarters had been invested by Job Dowling in the Heathstone Saving Institution, a Buffalo bank that had promised the close-minded man a large rate of interest. The cashier of this bank, Braxton Bogg, had absconded, taking with him all the available cash which the institution possessed. Bogg had come to Manila, and there Ben had fallen in with him several times and finally accomplished his arrest. It was found that Braxton Bogg had very little money on his person, and the guilty cashier finally admitted that he had left his booty at the house of one Benedicto Lupez, a Spaniard with whom he had boarded. As all the Spaniards in Manila were being closely watched by the soldiers doing police duty in the dis-

turbed city, both Ben and Larry had supposed that there would be no further trouble in getting possession of the missing money. But Benedicto Lupez had slipped away unperceived, taking the stolen money with him, and the Russell inheritance — or at least the larger portion of it — was as far out of the reach of the boys as ever.

CHAPTER II

SOMETHING ABOUT THE SITUATION AT MALOLOS

"Do you know if the Manila authorities have any idea where this Benedicto Lupez has gone to?" asked Ben, after partaking of some delicacies which Larry had managed to obtain for him.

"They think he got on a small boat and went up the Pasig River. He is supposed to have a brother living in Santa Cruz on the Laguna de Bay. This brother is said to be in thorough sympathy with the insurgents."

"In that case he is out of our reach for the present, as the rebels, so I understand, have a pretty good force in and around Santa Cruz. But if this Lupez has the money, I can't understand how he would join the rebels. They'll try to get the cash from him, if they need it."

"Perhaps he is foolish enough to think that they will win out in this fight, Ben. You know how hot-headed some of these people are. They haven't any

idea of the real power of Uncle Sam. I believe if they did know, they would submit without another encounter."

"It would be best if they did, Larry, for now that we are in this fight we are bound to make them yield. Once they throw down their arms, I feel certain our country will do what is fair and honest by them."

"It's the leaders who are urging the ignorant common people on — I've heard more than one of the officers say so. The leaders are well educated and crafty, and they can make the masses believe almost anything. Why, just before I came away from Manila I saw a dozen or more Igorottes brought in — tall, strapping fellows, but as ignorant as so many children. They seemed to be dazed when their wounds were cared for and they were offered food. The interpreter said they thought they would be massacred on the spot by the bloodthirsty *Americanos*, and they had a lurking suspicion that they were being cared for just so they could be sold into slavery."

At this juncture a tall, thoroughly browned soldier came in, wearing the uniform of a first lieutenant.

"Well, Ben, how is it to-day," he said cheerily, as he extended his hand. "And how are you, Larry?" And he likewise shook hands with the young tar.

"I'm hoping to get out soon, Gilbert," answered Ben. "But what's this—a lieutenant's uniform?"

"Yes, I've been promoted to first lieutenant of Company B," returned Gilbert Pennington. "I tell you, we are all climbing up the ladder, and Larry must look to his laurels. I understand you are to be made permanent captain of Company D."

"But where is First Lieutenant Crunger of your company?"

"Disappeared," and the young Southerner's face took on a sober look. "That's the only thing that mars my happiness over my promotion. After the taking of Malolos, Jack Crunger disappeared utterly, and we haven't been able to find hide nor hair of him, although half a dozen scouting parties have been sent out and the stream has been dragged in several places."

"Perhaps he was taken prisoner," suggested Larry. "I heard some of the Kansas and Utah men were missing, too."

"We are afraid he is a prisoner, and if that is so,

Aguinaldo's men have probably taken him up to San Fernando, where the insurgents are setting up their new capital."

"And what is going on at the firing line?" asked Ben, eagerly. "Are they following up the rebels' retreat?"

"I'm sorry to say no. General MacArthur made a reconnoissance in the direction of Calumpit, but it amounted to little."

"I understand that the *Charleston* has sailed up the coast and is going to shell Dagupan," put in Larry. "Dagupan, you know, is the terminus of the railroad line."

"That's good," came from the sick brother. "If we can get a footing in Dagupan, we can work the railroad territory from both ends." But this was not to be, as coming events speedily proved, for the shelling of the city by the warship amounted to but little.

Gilbert Pennington knew all about the Braxton Bogg affair and listened with interest to what Larry had to relate.

"It's too bad," he declared. "I'd like to give you some hope, boys, but I'm afraid you'll have to whistle for your fortune. That Spaniard will keep

out of the reach of the Americans, and if the worst comes to the worst, he'll slip off to Spain or South America; you mark my words."

Larry's leave of absence was for forty-eight hours only, and soon he was forced to bid his brother and his friend good-by. "Now take good care of yourself, Ben," he said, on parting. "And do stay here until you are stronger. Remember that a wounded man can't stand this broiling sun half as well as one who isn't wounded, and even the strongest of them are suffering awfully from the heat."

"I'll make him stay," put in Gilbert, with mock severity. "Surgeon Fallox won't give him clearance papers until I tell him, for he's a great friend of mine."

"I'm going to have a word with Stummer before I go," added Larry, and hurried to the ward in which the sturdy German volunteer had been placed. He found the member of Ben's company propped up on some grass pillows, smoking his favorite brier-root pipe.

"Sure, an' I vos glad to see you, Larry," cried Carl, his round face broadening into a smile on beholding his visitor. "Yah, I vos doin' putty goot, und I peen out on der firin' line next veek.

maype. But say, I vos sorry I peen shot town pefore we got to Malolos. I vos dink sure I help clean dose repels out."

"Never mind, you did your duty, Carl. I've heard they are going to make you a corporal for your bravery."

"Sure, an' that's right," came in an Irish voice behind the pair, and Dan Casey, another volunteer of Ben's company, appeared. "It's mesilf as has the honor av saying it first, too, Carl. You are to be first corporal, Carl, wid meself doin' juty as second corporal."

The German volunteer's face lit up for a second, then fell suspiciously. "Say, Dan, vos dis a choke maype?" he said slowly.

"A joke, is it?" burst out Casey. "Sure, an' do ye think I'd be afther playin' a joke on a wounded man, Carl? No, it's no joke. We're raised to the dignity av officers be the forchunes av war an' the recommendations av our superior, Actin' Captain Russell, which same will soon be our captain be commission, Providence an' the President willin'."

"Good for Ben!" exclaimed Larry. "You both deserve it." And after a few words more he hurried off, leaving the two old soldiers to congratulate

themselves on their advancement and speculate upon how high they might rise in the service before the rebellion should close. Casey had his eye set on a captaincy, but Stummer said he would be quite content if any commissioned office came his way, even if it was but a second-lieutenancy.

Malolos had been captured on Friday, March 31, 1899, at a little after ten o'clock in the morning, although the fighting kept up until nearly nightfall. As soon as the rebels were thoroughly cleaned out, many of the soldiers were called upon to do duty as firemen, for a large portion of the town was in flames. While the fire was being put out, other soldiers went about stopping the Chinese from looting the deserted mansions. The coolies were at first made prisoners and put under guard in the public park, but later on they were released and set to work to clean the streets.

As Gilbert had said, the days immediately following the fall of Malolos were not of special activity. The hard, running fight along the railroad through Caloocan, Polo, and other places, had all but exhausted the army under General MacArthur, and when the insurgents' capital was taken, it was

felt that the soldiers had earned a well-needed rest. Moreover, many had been wounded and many more were down, suffering from the heat and tropical fever, and these had to be cared for in the temporary hospitals established at various points in the neighborhood. In the meantime the railroad was repaired and Malolos was made a new base for supplies. There were several skirmishes in the neighborhood north and northeast of Malolos, and in these the rebels were compelled to fall back still further, yet the outbreaks amounted to but little.

In the meantime, the Philippine Commission of the United States issued a proclamation, translated into the Spanish and Tagalog languages, calling upon the insurgents to throw down their arms and promising them good local government, the immediate opening of schools and courts of law, the building of railroads, and a civil service administration in which the native should participate. This proclamation was widely distributed, yet it did little good; for the common people of the islands were given to understand by their leaders that the Americans did not mean what they said, but had come to their country only to plunder

them, and would in the end treat them even worse than had the Spaniards.

It was no easy work to repair the railroad running from Manila to Malolos Station, which was some distance from the town proper. All tools and equipments had to be brought up from Manila and from Cavite, and soon the engineering corps found themselves harassed by some rebels in the vicinity of Marilao and Guiguinto. At once General MacArthur sent out a force to clear the ground, and several sharp attacks ensued, which resulted in the loss of twenty-three killed and wounded on the American side, and double that number to the enemy. In the end the rebels fled to the mountains to the eastward and to Calumpit on the north.

"We are going out to-morrow," said Gilbert, as he came to see Ben on the day following the engagements just mentioned. "General Wheaton says he is going to drive the rebels straight into the mountains — and I reckon he'll keep his word."

Ben was at once anxious to go along, but this was not yet to be, and he was forced to sit at a window of the hospital and see his regiment march by with colors flying gayly and all "the boys"

eager for another contest. The members of his own company gave him a cheer as they passed. "You'll soon be with us again, captain," cried one. "We won't forget you! Hurrah!" and on they marched, with a lieutenant from Company A leading them, and with Gilbert and Major Morris and many old friends with the regiment. Ben watched them out of sight, and heaved a long sigh over the fact that he was not of their number. But there was still plenty of fighting in store for the young captain, and many thrilling and bitter experiences in the bargain.

CHAPTER III

AN ADVENTURE ON THE PASIG RIVER

"HURRAH, Luke! I reckon I am going to see a bit of fighting at last."

It was Larry who spoke, as he rushed up to his old friend, Luke Striker, now one of the gun captains on board the *Olympia*. It was the day after the young tar had paid the visit to Ben.

"Fighting? where?" demanded the Yankee gunner. "Do you mean to say as how the *Olympia* is goin' to do some scoutin' alongshore, lad?"

"No, the ship is going to remain right where she is. But General Lawton is going to take an expedition up the Pasig River from San Pedro Macati to the Laguna de Bay, and some of the sailors are going along to help manage the cascos and other boats. I just applied for a place, along with Jack Biddle, and we both got in."

"And why can't I get in?" returned Luke, eagerly. "This here everlastin' sitting still, doin' nuthin', is jest a-killin' of me."

"You might apply, although there are already more volunteers than they want," answered Larry. He told his old friend how to make the necessary application, and soon Luke had joined the expedition; and the three friends hastened ashore and on board a shallow river transport, which was to take them and a number of others up to San Pedro Macati.

The brief journey to the latter-named village was without incident. Here Larry found assembled a body of about thirteen hundred soldiers, infantry and cavalry, and with them two hundred picked sharpshooters, and two guns manned by members of the regular artillery. Owing to the sickness of the commanding general, General Lawton took personal charge of the expedition.

No man was better fitted for fighting in the Philippines than Major General Henry W. Lawton, who had but lately arrived in the islands, and who was destined to die the death of a hero upon the firing line. Of commanding appearance, being six feet three inches in height and weighing over two hundred pounds, he was a soldier by nature and a natural leader among leaders. He had fought all through the great Civil War with much credit to

himself, and it was he who, during the great Apache Indian uprising, followed the crafty Geronimo through mountain and over desert for a distance of nearly fourteen hundred miles, and at last caused him to surrender. For this, it is said, the Indians called him "Man-who-gets-up-in-the-night-to-fight," and they respected him as they respected few others.

With the outbreak of the war with Spain General Lawton was in his element, and when the army of occupation sailed for Santiago he was with them; and it was this same Lawton who stormed El Caney and captured it, as related in "A Young Volunteer in Cuba." When General Shafter wanted to call Lawton away from El Caney, after the troops had been fighting many hours, Lawton sent him word, "I can't stop — I've got to fight," and went forward again; and in less than an hour the Spanish flag at the top of the hill was down, and Old Glory had taken its place.

General Lawton was addressing several members of his staff when Larry first saw him at San Pedro Macati. He stood, war map in hand, in front of the river landing, a conspicuous figure among the half-dozen that surrounded him.

"He's a fighter — you can see that," whispered Larry to Luke, who stood beside him. "Just look at that square-set jaw. He won't let up on the rebels an inch."

"Jest the kind we're a-wantin' out here," responded the Yankee gunner. "The more they force the fightin' the sooner the war will come to an end. He's coming toward us," he added, as General Lawton stepped from out of the circle around him.

"You are from the *Olympia*, I believe?" he said, addressing Luke.

"Yes, general," replied the old gunner, touching his forelock, while Larry also saluted. "We volunteered for this expedition."

"You look all right, but —" General Lawton turned to Larry. "I'm afraid you are rather young for this sort of thing, my lad," he went on.

"I hope not, sir," cried Larry, quickly. "I've seen fighting before."

"He was in the thickest of it when we knocked out Admiral Montojo, general," interposed Luke. "You can trust him to do his full share, come what may."

"Oh, if he was in that fight I guess he'll be all

right," responded General Lawton, with a grim sort of a smile. And he turned away to overlook the shipping of some ammunition on one of the tinclad gunboats which was to form part of the expedition.

The troops were speedily on the cascos, which were to be towed by several steam launches and escorted by three tinclads. Although Larry and his friends did not know it till several hours later, the destination was Santa Cruz, a pretty town, situated on a slight hill overlooking the placid waters of the Laguna de Bay. The general's plan was to reach the lake by nightfall, and steal over the silent waters in the dark until the vicinity of Santa Cruz was gained, in hopes that the garrison might be caught "napping," as it is called.

For the time being the sailors were separated one from another, each being put in charge of a casco, the shallow rowboats being joined together in strings of four to six each, and pulled along with many a jerk and twist by the puffing little launches, which at times came almost to a standstill.

"We won't reach the lake by sunrise, and I know it," remarked one of the soldiers to Larry,

who stood in the bow of the casco with an oar, ready to do whatever seemed best for the craft. "We've a good many miles to go yet."

At that instant the casco ahead ran aground in the shallow river, and Larry had all he could do to keep his craft from running into it. As the two boats came stem to stern one of the soldiers in the craft ahead called out to those behind: —

"Say, Idaho, do you know where we are bound?"

"Bound for Santa Cruz, so I heard our captain remark," answered one of the soldiers in Larry's boat. "Got any tobacco, North Dakota?"

"Nary a pipeful, wuss luck," was the response; and then the line straightened out as the casco ahead cleared herself from the mud, and the two boats moved apart once more.

"Are we really going to Santa Cruz?" questioned Larry, as soon as he got the chance. "I thought we were bound for the north shore of the lake."

"I can only tell you what I heard the captain say," answered the soldier, with a shrug of his shoulder. "General Lawton ain't blowing his plans through a trumpet, you know."

"I hope we do go to Santa Cruz," mused Larry, as he thought of what had been said of Benedicto

Lupez. "And if we take the town I hope we take that rascal, too."

The best laid plans are often upset by incidents trifling in themselves. It was the dry season of the year, and the Pasig River, usually broad and turbulent, was now nothing better than a muddy, shallow creek, winding and treacherous to the last degree. As night came on the expedition found itself still in the stream and many miles from the lake, and here cascos and launches ran aground and a general mix-up ensued.

"Hullo, what have we run up against now?" growled the lieutenant in charge of the soldiers in Larry's boat. "Can't you keep out of the mud, Jackie?"

"I'm doing my best," panted the youth, as he shoved off for at least the fourth time. "With the lines forward and aft pulling one way and another it's rather difficult to keep to the channel, especially in the dark."

"Oh, you're only a boy and don't understand the trick," growled the lieutenant, who was in a bad humor generally. "I don't see why they let you come along."

"Our boat is doing about as well as any of them,"

answered Larry, bound to defend himself. "Two boats are aground to our left and three behind us."

"See here, don't talk back to me! You tend to business and keep us out of the mud," roared the lieutenant, in worse humor than before.

An angry retort arose to Larry's lips, but he checked it. "A quarrel won't do any good," he thought. "But what a bulldog that fellow is — as bad as Quartermaster Yarrow, who caused me so much trouble on the trip out here."

On went the cascos once more, around a tortuous bend and past a bank fringed with bushes and reeds. The mosquitoes were numerous, likewise the flies, and everybody began to wish the journey at an end.

"We'd better make a charge on the insects," growled one old soldier. "They are worse nor the rebels ten times over," and, just then, many were inclined to agree with him. Tobacco was scarce or smoking would have been far more plentiful than it was.

Midnight came and went, and found the expedition still some distance from the lake. A few of the soldiers were sleeping, but the majority remained wide awake, fighting off the marshland pests, and

aiding in keeping the cascos and launches from running high and dry in the mud. Had it not been for the tinclads it is doubtful if the Laguna de Bay would have been gained at all by more than half of the craft composing the turnout. But they came to the rescue time and again, and so the expedition crawled along, until, at four o'clock, the clear sheet of water beyond was sighted.

They were making the last turn before the lake was gained when the casco ahead of that steered by Larry went aground once more, dragging Larry's craft behind it. The youth did all he could to back water, but in vain, and once more they heard the unwelcome slish of mud under their bottom.

"Now you've done it again!" howled the lieutenant, leaping up from his seat. "You numskull! give me that oar." And he tried to wrench the blade from Larry's hand.

"It was not my fault," began the youth, when the officer forced the blade from him and hurled him back on one of the soldiers. Then the lieutenant tried to do some poling for himself, and got the oar stuck so tightly in the mud that he could not loosen it.

Burning with indignation, Larry felt himself go

down in a heap, and at once tried to get up again. At the same time the soldier beneath him gave him a shove which pitched him several feet forward. He landed up against the lieutenant with considerable force, and in a twinkle the officer went overboard, head first, into the water and mud where the casco had stuck fast.

CHAPTER IV

THE GAP IN THE FIRING LINE

"HULLO, Lieutenant Horitz has fallen overboard!"

"Pull him out of the mud, before he smothers or drowns!"

Such were some of the cries which arose among the soldiers that filled the casco. Then Larry was shoved back, and two of them caught hold of the legs of the man who had disappeared, as for an instant they showed themselves. There was a "long pull, a strong pull, and a pull altogether," and up came the lieutenant, minus his hat and with his face and neck well plastered with the black ooze of the river bottom.

For a moment after he sank on the seat that was vacated to receive him, he could not speak. One of the soldiers handed him a handkerchief, and with this he proceeded to clear his eyes and ears, at the same time puffing vainly to get back his breath. At last he cleared his throat and glared angrily at Larry.

"You — you young whelp!" he fumed. "You — you knocked me over on purpose!"

"No, sir, I did not," answered the young tar, promptly. "One of the soldiers shoved me up against you."

"I don't believe you," roared the unreasonable one, as he continued to clean himself off. "You shall pay dearly for this assault, mark me!"

"Didn't you shove me?" asked Larry, appealing to one of the soldiers.

"I shoved you off of my neck, yes," answered the enlisted man. "But I didn't throw you into Lieutenant Horitz. You did that yourself."

"Of course he did it himself," said another soldier, who did not wish to see his tent-mate get into trouble. "You had it in for the lieutenant ever since he first spoke to you."

"I shall report you the first chance I get," growled Lieutenant Horitz. "I reckon you'll find that General Lawton won't allow any such disgraceful conduct while he is in command."

"What's the row back there?" came out of the darkness. "Hurry up and get afloat, or we'll cut the rope and leave you to shift for yourselves."

"Our officer was just shoved overboard," answered

Snapper, the soldier who had given Larry the unlucky push. "And we've lost our oar."

"No, I have the oar," put in Larry, making a clutch into the water for the article just as it was about to float out of reach. He leaped into the bow once more, and began to work vigorously, and in a few seconds they were again afloat.

Fortunately for the lieutenant the night was warm, so he suffered no inconvenience so far as his wet clothing was concerned. But it was no mean task to clean both himself and his uniform, and what to do for another hat he did not know. He would have taken Larry's headgear had that article been anyway suitable, but it was not.

It must be confessed that Larry felt thoroughly ill at ease. That there was trouble ahead went without saying, and he half wished himself safe back on the *Olympia*. "He'll make out the worst case he can against me," he thought. "And his men will back him up in all he says." Yet he felt that he was guilty of no intentional wrong-doing, and resolved to stand up for himself to the best of his ability.

The lieutenant had learned one lesson — that he knew no more about handling the casco than did Larry, if as much, and, consequently, he offered no

more suggestions as to how to run the craft. But he kept muttering under his breath at the youth, and Larry felt that he was aching to "get square."

It was early dawn when the casco turned into the lake proper. As the sun came up it shed its light on one of the prettiest sheets of water Larry had ever beheld. The lake was as smooth as a millpond, and surrounded with long stretches of marshland and heavy thickets of tropical growth. Fish were plentiful, as could be seen by gazing into the clear depths below, and overhead circled innumerable birds. Villages dotted the lake shore at various points, but these the expedition gave a wide berth, setting out directly for Santa Cruz, still several miles distant, behind the hill previously mentioned.

If it had been General Lawton's intention to attack the town from in front in the dark, that plan had now to be changed, and the expedition turned toward shore at a point at least three miles from the town proper.

But even here the rebels could be seen to be on the alert, and a rapid-firing gun was put into action and directed along the lake front. The gun was manned by some men from the *Napadan*, and did such wonderful execution that soon the insurgent sentries

were seen to be fleeing toward the town at utmost speed. Then a small detachment from some brush also retreated, and the coast was clear.

It was no easy matter to land, as the water here was shallow and the cascos had to be poled along over the soft mud. The sharpshooters were the first ashore, and they soon cleared a spot for the others. But a few of the rebels were "game," and as a result one man was wounded, although not seriously. The cavalry remained on the boats, to land closer to the hill later on.

The landing had consumed much valuable time, and it was now after noon. A hasty meal was had, and then the column moved off, spreading out in fan shape as it advanced, the sharpshooters to the front and the rear, and a number of special scouts on the alert to give the first warning of danger. Soon the scouts in front came back with the news that the insurgents were forming in front of our troops and that Santa Cruz and its garrison seemed thoroughly aroused to the danger which threatened.

"Forward, boys!" was the cry. "The more time we give them, the better they will be prepared to meet us. Forward without delay!" And the "boys" went forward with a wild hurrah, for every-

thing promised well, and they were much pleased to have General Lawton lead them, even though they had no fault to find with their other commanders.

The first skirmish began on the extreme right. Some rebels had found their way to a hill behind the town, and they began the attack from a patch of wild plantains, thickly interlaced with tropical vines. Up the hill after them dashed the right wing, and the sharp rattle of musketry resounded upon both sides for the best part of half an hour. Then the rebels broke and ran, and in their eagerness our troops followed them until a point less than two miles from Santa Cruz was gained. Here the insurgents scattered, and could not be rounded up, and the right wing fell back, to unite with the main body of the expedition. But the woods were thick, the ground new to the Americans, and in the gathering darkness it was several hours before the firing line was compact once more. Then the expedition rested for the night.

Larry had landed with the soldiers, and, as the other cascos came up, he was speedily joined by Luke Striker and Jack Biddle.

"I wonder what part we air to take in this comin' mix-up?" queried Luke.

"Like as not they will leave us here to mind the boats," replied Larry. "I can tell you that I am rather sorry I came along," he added soberly.

"Sorry!" ejaculated Jack Biddle. "Surely, Larry, ye ain't afraid—"

"No, I'm not afraid," interrupted the youth. And then he told of the scene in the casco, and of what Lieutenant Horitz had said. When he had finished, Jack cut a wry face and Luke uttered a low whistle.

"You've run up agin a rock fer sartin, Larry," remarked Luke. "I reckon he can make things look putty bad for ye if he's of a mind to do it."

"Keep quiet an' say nuthin', an' he may forgit all about it," was Jack Biddle's advice.

The boats having been cared for, the sailors followed the soldiers through the field and into the woods. All told there were twenty-five jackies, and by common consent they formed themselves into a company of their own, with a petty officer named Gordell at their head. Gordell went to General Lawton for directions, and was told to follow the volunteers until given further orders. Each sailor was armed with a pistol and a ship's cutlass.

The march was a hot one, but Larry was now getting accustomed to the tropics and hardly minded this. The little company advanced with caution, nobody desiring to run into an ambush. Soon the firing on the right reached their ears, and they knew that some sort of an engagement was on. Then came a halt, and presently the darkness of night fell over them; and they went into camp beside a tiny watercourse flowing into a good-sized stream which separated the expedition from the outskirts of Santa Cruz.

Supper disposed of, Larry and Luke Striker took a stroll forward, to find out what the firing line was really doing and if the insurgents were in front in force. "We may have a bigger fight on hand nor any of us expect," suggested the old Yankee gunner.

"You can trust General Lawton not to run his head into the lion's mouth," returned Larry. "A soldier who has whipped the Apache Indians isn't going to suffer any surprise at the hands of these Tagals, no matter how wily they are."

"Don't be too sure o' thet, Larry. The best on us make mistakes sometimes," answered the Yankee, with a grave shake of his head. But Gen-

eral Lawton made no mistake, as we shall speedily see.

As has been said, the right wing had become detached from the main body of the expedition during the fight on the hill back of Santa Cruz. The firing line of this wing had not yet united with the centre, consequently there was a gap of over a quarter of a mile in the front. Had the Tagalogs known of this they might have divided the expedition and surrounded the right wing completely, but they did not know, so the temporary separation did no damage to the soldiers. But that gap brought a good bit of trouble to Larry and his friend.

On and on went the pair, down a narrow road lined on either side with palms and plantains and sweet-smelling shrubs. From the hollows the frogs croaked dismally, and here and there a night bird uttered its lonely cry, but otherwise all was silent.

"Humph, they've pushed the firing line ahead further than I thought," remarked Luke, after half a mile had been covered. "Here's a small river. Do ye reckon as how they went over thet, lad?"

"It must be so," answered the boy. "Certainly, we haven't been challenged."

Crossing the rude bridge, they found that the road made a sharp turn to the southward. Beyond was a nipa hut, back of which burnt a small camp-fire. Both hut and fire seemed deserted.

"They have cleaned the rebels out from there," said Larry. "Come ahead," and they continued on their way, little dreaming of the trap into which they were walking.

The nipa hut passed, they came to a tall fence built of bamboo stalks, sharpened at the tops and bound with native rope-vine. Farther on still were a dozen shelters, and here could be seen several women and children sitting in the doorways.

"Perhaps they can give us some information," said Larry, as they approached the natives. As soon as they saw the Americans the children shrieked dismally and rushed out of sight. But the women held their ground, feeling that they would not be molested.

"See anything of our soldiers?" demanded Luke of the women, but one and all shook their heads. "No Englees talk," mumbled one, meaning they did not understand or speak our tongue.

The natives' manner made Larry suspicious, and he glanced around hurriedly. As he did so there

was a click of a trigger from behind the bamboo fence.

"*Americanos* surrender," came in bad English from back of the fence. "Surrender quick, or we shoot both dead on the spot!"

CHAPTER V

AN ENCOUNTER AT THE RIVER

To say that both Larry and his old friend were surprised at the sudden demand which had been made upon them would be to put the truth very mildly. They had been of the firm belief that the insurgents had retreated, and to find themselves in a "reg'lar hornet's nest," as Luke afterward expressed it, dumfounded them.

"Do you surrender, or not?" came the words, after an awkward pause.

It was dark about the huts, yet not so dim but that they could see the barrels of several Mauser rifles thrust toward them. The sight made Larry shiver, for he had never before met the rebel soldiers at such close quarters.

"We're in a box," muttered Luke. "Somethin' wrong somewhar — our soldiers didn't come this way, ye kin reckon on thet."

"I move we run for it," whispered Larry. "If

they take us prisoners — " He did not finish, but his silence was more impressive than mere words would have been. He had heard many stories of terrible cruelty practised by the insurgents on their prisoners, and whether these tales were true or not, they had had their full effect on both him and his shipmates.

"Where are ye goin' to run to, lad? We don't want to run an' be shot down in cold blood."

"Get in front of me and take to the woods opposite, Luke,' was the hurried reply. "Here goes! I don't think they'll fire now!"

As Larry concluded, he sprang to the side of one of the native women standing nearest to him. Before the woman could resist, he had her in his arms behind him and was running off as speedily as the weight of his living load permitted. Seeing this, Luke scuttled off before, and away they went for the woods, not twenty yards distant.

A howl arose on the night air, and one gun went off, but the bullet did no damage. Then the leader of the rebels was heard, calling to his men not to fire, for fear of killing the woman, who chanced, by good luck, to be a close relative; for the soldiers behind the bamboo fence were part of

a home guard brought out that very afternoon to defend the road and Santa Cruz.

The woman on Larry's back shrieked in terror and clawed at his neck and hair, causing him considerable pain. But he held his burden tight until the shelter of the trees was gained, when he let her slip to the ground and darted after Luke, who was running with all the speed of his lanky limbs.

It was pitch dark in the jungle, and the pair had not advanced more than a hundred yards when they found themselves going down into a hollow which both felt must lead to a dangerous swamp, or morass, for the island of Luzon is full of such fever-breeding places.

"Go slow, lad," whispered Luke, as he caught Larry by the hand. "We don't want to land out o' the fryin'-pan into the fire."

They both became silent and listened attentively. At a distance they heard the insurgents coming on slowly and cautiously, spreading out as they advanced. Probably they knew the topography of the country and meant to surround the hollow completely.

"They are coming, that's sure," whispered Larry,

and clutched his pistol. "I wonder if we can't get away from them by climbing a tree."

"We can—if they ain't a-followin' the trail putty close," answered his companion.

They began to search around for a tree, and in doing so came to several large rocks, much overgrown with trailing vines. There was an opening between two of the rocks, and Luke slipped into this, hauling Larry after him.

"Jest as good as a tree, an' mebbe better," he whispered, as he rearranged the vines over the opening.

The hiding-place was not a large one, and Larry felt very much like a sardine in a box as he crouched close to his Yankee friend. The vines covered the opening completely, yet they remained on guard, each with his finger on the trigger of his weapon, resolved, if the worst came to the worst, to fight the best they knew how before surrendering.

The Filipinos were evidently puzzled, for they had come to a halt and made not the slightest noise. Possibly they were listening for some sound from those they were pursuing, but if so, none came, for Luke clapped his hand warningly over

Larry's mouth, and the youth understood and remained as motionless as a statue.

Five minutes went by — to the boy they seemed an age — and then the rebels came on again, halting every few steps to make sure of their ground. Three passed close to the rocks, so close in fact that Larry and Luke could have shot them down without trouble. But this would have given the alarm to the entire party, and neither the boy nor the man wanted to shed blood unless it became absolutely necessary.

At last the Filipinos had left the rocks behind and were circling around the swamp at the bottom of the hollow. "Now is the time to give 'em the slip," whispered Luke, and crawled once more into the open. Larry followed, and both hurried away from the vicinity with all possible speed. It was the last seen or heard of the party who had so unexpectedly blockaded their progress on the highway.

The jungle at the top of the hill was as dense as that below, and the pair had not proceeded far before they found themselves in a veritable tangle of bushes and vines. The bushes were of the thorny kind peculiar to this locality, and more than

once Larry found himself caught and held as if in a vice.

"My clothing will be in tatters if this keeps on," he panted, as he cut himself loose with difficulty. "Did you ever see such a thicket!"

"We missed it when we started out to-night," returned Luke, gravely. "We've gone astray o' the firin' line and everything else, to my way o' lookin' at it."

Bad as was their situation, they felt it would be worse with the coming of daylight. "We must get out of the enemy's territory before the sun rises,' said Larry. "If we don't, we'll have no show at all."

But getting out was not easy; indeed, the farther they advanced, the more difficult did it seem to become, until both came to the conclusion that they had missed their bearings entirely, and were lost. "And can't even see the stars to read 'em," groaned Luke. "Larry, we might as well make the best of it, and wait for daylight."

But the youth demurred and insisted on going ahead. "We're bound to strike something soon," he said, and did, immediately afterward. It was a log lying on the edge of an incline, and down he

"Alto!" came the sudden cry. — *Page 47.*

pitched, and log and lad rolled over and over, with Luke following, to bring up with a loud splash in the river below.

The force of their fall took them under the surface of the stream, and in the struggle to save themselves both lost their cutlasses. But, as old readers know, each could swim well, and they speedily came up and struck out for the most available landing-place, which was on the opposite bank.

"*Alto!*" came the sudden cry, in Spanish. "Halt!" And now a sentry appeared from behind a pile of cord-wood lying but a short distance away.

"Discovered again," muttered Luke, and felt for his pistol. "Soaked!" he muttered, in disgust.

The cry of the rebel on guard had given the alarm to several others, and in a twinkling Larry and the old Yankee tar found themselves confronted by an even more determined crowd than that encountered on the road. With the water behind them, escape was out of the question, for a jump back into the river would have courted a fire which must have resulted in death.

"*Americanos!*" muttered one of the rebels, draw-

ing closer. "And sailors, not soldiers," he added, in his native tongue. "Where did you come from?"

Larry and Luke shook their heads. "Talk United States and we'll speak to you," said the old sailor.

"You gif up?" demanded an under officer, as he pushed his way forward, with his pistol covering Larry's heart.

"Ain't nuthin' else to do, I reckon," replied Luke, before Larry could answer. He was afraid the boy might be rash and try running away again.

"Throw down de pistoles, den," muttered the Tagal, with an ugly frown.

Down went the weapons on the ground, and then two of the rebels advanced to search them. They found nothing of special value excepting the pair's jack-knives, and these were confiscated and turned over to the officer in command.

The prisoners were then told to march up the river shore to a road leading into Santa Cruz. With their hands bound tightly behind them, they were placed in charge of a detail of four Filipinos, who were instructed to take them without delay before the general in charge of the city's defences.

"They may hold information of importance,"

said the under officer. "Do not delay a minute;" and off went the crowd, the soldiers prodding the prisoners with their bayonets whenever Larry and Luke did not walk fast enough to suit them.

The course taken was through a narrow and exceedingly dirty street. It was after midnight, yet the expected attack of the Americans had kept all the inhabitants awake. The prisoners were jeered at repeatedly, and at one point were covered with a shower of mud and stale vegetables. The onslaught might have been more serious had not the soldiers interfered.

"Get back, you dogs," shouted the leader, a little Tagal scarcely five feet in height, but with an air of magnificent importance. "These men are to go before the general, and at once!" And much abashed the natives fell back, and the prisoners were molested no further.

It would naturally be supposed that the general in command would be found at the front at such a time, when an attack on the city was but a matter of a few hours. Instead, however, General Bamodo was found at one of the government buildings, calmly smoking a cigar, and conversing with several native business men.

"Spies, eh?" he queried, when the guard had told him about the prisoners. "Bring them in immediately."

Larry and Luke were told to enter the room, and did so, their still wet clothing forming little puddles at their feet. The guards stood beside and behind them. General Bamodo eyed them critically. He spoke no English, and so called in an interpreter.

"Where are you from?" demanded the interpreter, presently, after a few words with his superior.

"We are from the warship *Olympia*," answered Luke, briefly.

"You were sent here by General Otis as spies, not so?"

"No, sir, we are jest plain, everyday sailors."

"Then what brought you here?" demanded the interpreter, after translating their words to General Bamodo.

"We missed our way on the road," put in Larry, before Luke could answer. He thought it best not to say anything about accompanying General Lawton's expedition.

"You must have missed it very much, General Bamodo says," growled the interpreter, after an-

other consultation with his superior. "Santa Cruz is a good many miles from Manila harbor."

To this Larry remained silent, and another talk in Spanish followed. Then a sudden shot from a distance caused General Bamodo to leap to his feet and dash down his cigar.

"Take them to the prison — I will examine them later on," he said, in Spanish, and hurried away.

A few minutes later Larry and his Yankee friend were marched off, this time to a stone building several squares away. Here they were taken inside, thrust into a cell, the iron-barred door was locked upon them, and they were left to their fate.

CHAPTER VI

IN WHICH LUKE STRIKER IS WOUNDED

THE plan to surprise Santa Cruz had failed, yet General Lawton's command was just as eager as ever to press forward and do battle with the native garrison, of which the town on the Laguna de Bay boasted. It was thought the Filipino command could not be a strong one, and even if it had been the Americans would have gone ahead just the same, so accustomed were they to victory over their misguided foes.

It was arranged that the centre and left wing of the infantry should move directly upon the town, while the right wing should swing around, to cut off the Filipinos' retreat, should they start such a movement. In the meantime, protected by a cross fire from the tinclads, *Laguna* and *Oeste*, the cavalry landed on the hill overlooking the bay, and began to do battle with the enemy's force in that territory, cutting its way over field and brush to

the left wing as it swung closer to the river already mentioned several times. The cavalry developed a strong resistance which lasted for over an hour; but in the end the Filipinos were glad enough to fall back into the town proper.

Out on the main road leading to the principal bridge over the river the sun was boiling hot, and many a soldier felt more like seeking shelter and resting than like pushing forward with his heavy gun and other equipments. But General Lawton was here and there, encouraging every one, and they pushed on until a sharp fire between the enemy and the advance guard told that a running fight, and perhaps a regular battle, would soon be at hand.

"At them, my men!" cried the various commanders. "They'll run, no doubt of it. They haven't stood up against us yet!" And away went the long skirmishing line, and soon there was a steady crack and pop of guns and pistols as the Americans pushed on, catching many a poor Filipino who was too late in either running or throwing down his arms. A number surrendered, and these were promptly sent to the rear.

Presently the river was gained, and here the

Americans came to an unexpected halt. There was a long bridge to cross, and beyond was a barricade of stone and wood. Were the insurgents massed behind that barricade? If they were, to cross the bridge in column of fours or otherwise would mean a terrible slaughter.

"Here goes!" sang out one petty officer, and made a dash forward, which was as reckless as it was daring. As he moved along the bridge several held their breath, expecting to see him go down at any instant. But then came a rush of first half a dozen, then a score, and then whole companies, and it was speedily seen that the barricade was practically deserted. The insurgents were hurrying into the town as hard as they could, with Uncle Sam's men after them, both sides keeping up a steady firing as they ran.

In the meantime, soaked to the skin and utterly miserable over their capture, Larry and his Yankee friend had been thrust into the prison cell and left to themselves. After the door was locked and the jailer walked away, the youth uttered a long-drawn sigh.

"Luke, we're in a pickle, this trip," he groaned. "What do you suppose they will do with us?"

"Heaven alone knows, my lad," responded the old tar. "Bein' as how they ain't cannibals, I don't reckon they'll eat us up," and he smiled grimly.

"They think we are spies."

"Thet's so."

"Do you know that they shoot spies — and do it in short order, too?"

"And why shouldn't I know it, Larry? I've heard tell on it often enough. But they have got to prove we air spies first, ain't they?"

"They'll do what they please. I believe half of these Filipinos think the Americans are nothing but cut-throats. They can't conceive that we should want to come here and govern them for their own good."

"Because they would rather govern themselves, even if they made a mess of it, than be under anybody's thumb nail, Larry. Howsomever, thet ain't the p'int jest now. The p'int is, kin we git out o' here before they settle to do wuss with us?"

"Get out? You mean break jail?"

"Exactly. We don't want to stay here if we kin git out, do we?"

"To be sure not." Larry leaped up from the bench upon which he had been resting and ran to

the door. At this Luke smiled glumly and shook his head.

"Ye won't go it thet way, lad — the guard locked it, I seen him do it, — and the lock is a strong one, too."

Luke was right, as a brief examination proved. Then the boy turned to the window, an affair less than a foot square, having over it several iron bars set firmly into the stones. "No thoroughfare there," was his comment.

The two next examined the floor, to find it of brick, and as solid as the walls. "Only the ceilin' left now," said Luke. "I reckon we might as well give it up. Even if we do git out, more'n likely a guard outside will shoot us down."

But Larry was determined to test the ceiling, which was but a couple of feet over their heads. So he had his companion hold him for that purpose.

"There is a loose board up there," he cried, as he was feeling his way along. "Hold me a little higher, Luke, and perhaps I can shove it up."

The old sailor did as requested, and with a strong push Larry shifted one end of the plank above, so that it left an opening ten inches wide and several feet long. Catching a good hold he pulled himself

to the apartment above, to find it stored with boxes and barrels containing old military uniforms and other army equipments, relics of Spanish rule.

"Any way out up thar?" queried Luke. "If there is, we don't want to waste any time, ye know."

"I'll tell you in a minute," replied Larry, in a low voice, and ran first to one end window of the storeroom and then the other. In front was the street, fast filling with soldiers. In the rear was a stable which just now seemed deserted. The several windows of the storeroom were all barred, but here the bars were screwed fast to wood instead of being set in stone.

"I think there is a chance here," said the boy, coming back to the opening. "Here, give me your hand, and I'll help you up," and he bent down; and soon Luke stood beside him.

"Think we can git out thet way, eh!" said the Yankee tar, surveying the prospect in the rear. "Well, I reckon it's worth workin' for, Larry. But the drop from the window, even if we pull away the bars —"

"Here is a rope — we can use that," answered the boy, pointing out the article around several small

boxes. While Luke pried away the bars of one of the rear windows he possessed himself of the rope, and tied it fast to a bar which was not disturbed. As soon as the opening was sufficiently large to admit of the passage of each one's body, Luke swung himself over the window-sill.

"Come on," he cried softly, and slipped from view. Never had he gone down a ship's rope quicker, and never had Larry followed his friend with such alacrity. Both felt that life or death depended upon the rapidity of their movements.

The ground was hardly touched by Luke when a Filipino boy appeared at the entrance to the stable. For an instant the youth stared in opened-mouthed astonishment, then he uttered a yell that would have done credit to an Indian on the war-path.

"The jig's up!" cried the Yankee tar. "Come, Larry, our legs have got to save us, if we're to be saved at all."

He leaped across the yard and for the corner of the stable, where he collided with a Tagal soldier, who was coming forward to learn what the yelling meant. Down went both the sailor and the guard; but the rebel got the worse of it, for he lay half stunned, while Luke was up in a trice. As the

soldier fell, his gun flew from his hands, and Larry tarried just long enough to pick the weapon up.

Behind the stable was a narrow, winding street, lined on either side with huts and other native dwellings, with here and there a barnlike warehouse. Into this street darted our two friends, and there paused, not knowing whether to move toward the wharves or in the opposite direction.

"Look out!" suddenly yelled Larry, and dropped flat, followed by the Yankee tar. A sharp report rang out, and a bullet whistled over their heads, coming from the prison yard. On the instant Larry fired in return, and the prison guard disappeared as if by magic. Long afterward, Larry learned that he had hit the Tagal in the arm.

There was now a general alarm throughout the prison, and the two escaped prisoners felt that any other locality would be better for them than the one they now occupied. "Let us try to find our soldiers," said Luke, and once again they started to run, this time up the road where, far away, they could make out a forest of some sort. Then came a second report, and Luke Striker staggered back, hit in the shoulder.

"Luke! Luke, you are struck!" gasped Larry.

His heart seemed to leap into his throat. What if his dearest friend had been mortally wounded?

"I—I—reckon it—it ain't much!" came with a shiver. The sailor straightened himself up and started to run again. "They are after us hot-like, ain't they?"

A turn in the road soon took them out of sight of the prison, and they breathed a bit more freely. But the strain was beginning to tell upon Luke, and watching him, Larry saw that he was growing deathly pale.

"You can't keep this up, Luke," he said, and put out his arm to aid his friend. As he did so, the Yankee tar gave a short groan, threw up both hands, and then sank down in a heap at the boy's feet.

CHAPTER VII

THE RETREAT TO THE RICE-HOUSE

LARRY was greatly alarmed, not knowing but that his companion was about to die on his hands. Quickly he knelt at the Yankee's side, to learn that Luke had fainted away from loss of blood. The shoulder of his shirt and jacket were saturated through and through.

"What shall I do?" the boy asked himself, and gazed hurriedly at the surroundings. To one side of the road were several nipa huts, to the other a long, rambling warehouse. The doorways of all the buildings stood open, and no one seemed to be in sight.

As quickly as he could the youth took up his friend and staggered with his heavy burden to the warehouse, which was about half filled with rice. Entering the structure, he passed to a small apartment somewhat in the rear. Here there was a quantity of old sacking in a heap, and upon this rude couch Larry placed the unconscious form.

The boy had been taught on shipboard just what to do in case of such an emergency, and now he worked as he never had before, for Luke was very dear to him, and the thought that his friend might die was horrible to contemplate. He prayed to Heaven that the old gunner's life might be spared to him.

The wound was an ugly one; yet even to Larry's inexperienced eye it did not look as if it could be fatal, and the boy breathed a long sigh of relief as he bound it up. Then he went in search of water, and finding a well back of the warehouse brought a bucketful in and began to bathe Luke. Soon the sufferer stirred and opened his honest eyes wonderingly.

"Why—er—how's this?" he stammered. "Did I—oh, I remember now!" And he sank back again.

"Keep quiet," whispered the boy. He had heard voices coming toward the warehouse. "If you make a sound, it may be all up with both of us."

The old tar breathed heavily and nodded. Throwing some sacking over the prostrate form, Larry slipped back into the main apartment of the ware-

house. He still held the gun, but it was empty and could be used only as a club.

Two men were approaching the warehouse, both tall, slim, and evidently of Spanish extraction. They were talking loudly and excitedly to one another; but as Larry understood but few words of Spanish, what they were saying was lost upon the boy.

"I don't believe they are after us," thought the lad, when the strangers came to a halt just outside the warehouse. As they did so a long volley of rifle shots came from a distance, followed by another and then another. The shooting came from the centre of the town and made Larry's heart beat fast. "Our soldiers must be coming in," he thought. "Oh, I hope they make the town ours!"

The shots appeared to disturb the two Spaniards greatly, for both clutched each other by the arm and looked thoroughly frightened.

Presently an old woman came running out of one of the huts. She yelled at the two Spaniards in her own tongue and pointed at the warehouse. Evidently she had seen Larry and Luke, but had been afraid to expose herself.

The strangers listened to the old woman with

interest, then began to talk to each other. "Perhaps we can get some information, José," said one, in Spanish.

"Perhaps we shall get a bullet," answered his companion, grimly. Nevertheless, he consented to enter the building, and both passed through the great doorway of the warehouse.

Hardly knowing how to receive the newcomers, Larry stepped for a moment behind a bin of rice. But then, as the pair moved toward where Luke lay, he raised his gun threateningly.

"Halt!" he called, as sternly as he could. "Halt, or I shall fire!"

"We are betrayed!" roared one of the Spaniards, in his native tongue. "No shoot! no shoot!" he added, in broken English. "We mean you no harm."

"Up with your hands, then," went on Larry, resolved to make the most of the situation, even though the gun was empty; and four hands went promptly into the air, for the two men before him were as cowardly as they were unprincipled.

There was an awkward silence for several seconds, while boy and men surveyed each other. Larry lowered the gun slightly, but still kept his

finger on the trigger. He noted that the newcomers appeared to be unarmed, although they had both knives and pistols hidden upon their persons.

"You are an *Americano* sailor, not so?" asked one of the Spaniards.

"I am," was Larry's prompt reply. "Are you one of Aguinaldo's rebels?"

"No, no! We are no rebels — we are peaceful Spanish gentlemen," put in the second Spaniard.

"Do you belong here?"

"I belong here," said the man who had first spoken. "My brother, he belongs at Manila."

The brother mentioned shot an angry glance at the speaker. "Yes, I come from Manila," he said. "But I belong truly in Spain, being a merchant of Madrid."

"Well, our war with you folks is over," said Larry, slowly, hardly knowing how to proceed. "If you are not going to help the rebels, you ought to help us. We are doing all we can for your prisoners out here," he added, meaning the Spaniards that were being held by the forces under General Aguinaldo — soldiers who were captured during the struggle between Spain and her Philippine colonies.

"We can do but little," came with a shrug of

the shoulders. "We are not armed, and if we help the *Americanos*, Aguinaldo says he will behead all the Spanish prisoners he is holding." Such a threat was actually made, but it is doubtful if the Filipinos would have been base enough to carry it out.

"We came in here not to make trouble," went on the second Spaniard. "We came to learn what the firing means. Are the *Americanos* coming here in force?"

"They are."

"Then Santa Cruz is doomed," groaned the Spaniard. He dropped his hands and began to pace the warehouse floor. "I shall lose much if the city falls. The rebels will burn all my property, for they hate me."

"I trust not," answered Larry, his fear of the pair gradually leaving him. "Hark to that!" he added, as the rattle of guns was again heard. "Our men must be coming in fast, and orders are to save everything that can be saved. If the rebels —"

He broke off short as a cry from Luke reached him. Running to the Yankee sailor he found Luke kicking out vigorously with his foot.

"I couldn't keep still no longer, nohow!" burst out the old tar. "A plagued rat came right up and wanted to nibble my leg, hang him. Who's them air fellows out thar?"

But the Spaniards had already followed Larry, and were now gazing at Luke in wonder. "Wounded, not so?" said one. "You were in the fight, then."

"No, we escaped from the prison," answered Larry, simply. "We were captured during last night. I wish I was sure we'd be safe here until our soldiers come along." He turned to the old sailor again. "How do you feel now?"

"Better, Larry, a heap better. But I ain't ready fer no more foot races jest yet."

"Then we'll have to remain here. Or perhaps you had better remain here while I go scouting around and see if I can find some of our soldiers, or the ambulance corps."

"An' what o' these gentlemen?"

"We shall go, too," said one of the Spaniards. "Your friend will be safe here — if he keeps hidden under the sacks," he added.

Waiting for the strangers to move first, Larry came behind them, still holding the gun as though

the weapon were ready for use. The men had spoken fairly enough, yet there was that about them which did not please Larry in the least. "They are regular rascals, or else I miss my guess," thought the youth.

The roadway still seemed deserted. But far off they could see the natives flying in several directions. Then from a distance came a cheer which Larry knew could only come from American throats.

"Our soldiers must be over there," he said to the Spaniards. "Will you come with me?"

The men hesitated, and consulted together in their native tongue. "I do not know what to say," said one, slowly, and began to follow Larry along the highway. Seeing this, the other came, too.

Suddenly a loud shout came to them from a thicket back of some nipa huts, and instantly a band of insurgents burst into view, armed with guns and bolos. They were firing as they retreated, and made a stand on the opposite side of the road.

"José Lupez!" cried one of the officers of the rebels, addressing one of the two Spaniards. "What do you here?"

"And have I no right here?" asked the Spaniard, sharply.

"Who is that with you?"

"My brother, Benedicto, from Manila, who was visiting me."

"He has betrayed us into the hands of the *Americanos!* If he—"

The rest of the sentence was drown out in a volley of musketry, and two rebels were seen to fall. Some started to run, but others held their ground.

Larry listened in amazement. He had heard the names José Lupez and Benedicto, and knew that the two Spaniards were brothers. Could this Spaniard, Benedicto Lupez, be the man who had made off with the money Braxton Bogg had stolen from the Hearthstone Saving Institution?

CHAPTER VIII

A PRISONER OF THE FILIPINOS

LARRY had retreated to a small nipa hut standing close to the roadway, feeling that if the Americans were coming in that direction, they would soon be at hand to give Luke and himself aid.

While the insurgents and the Spaniards were conversing, the latter had approached the hut, and now both followed the young sailor inside.

"Is your name Benedicto Lupez?" demanded Larry, approaching the taller of the pair.

"Yes," was the short response.

"Then you are from Manila — you ran away from there about two weeks ago?"

"Ha! what do you know of that?" demanded the Spaniard, eying Larry darkly.

"I know a good deal about you," answered the youth, boldly. "After Braxton Bogg was arrested you made off with the money he had left at your residence."

"'Tis false!" roared the Spaniard, but his face

blanched even as he spoke. "I know nothing of that man or his money. I — I was deceived in him."

"If that is so, why did you leave Manila in such a hurry?"

"I — I wanted to help my brother, who was in trouble. I have not seen a dollar of Bogg's money. 'Tis he who still owes me for his board, black wretch that he was!" roared Benedicto Lupez, savagely.

At these words Larry was startled. Was Lupez really telling the truth, and if so, where was the money that had wrecked the saving institution?

"He didn't even pay his board?"

"Not one piaster, boy, — nothing. And I thought him honest, or I would not have taken him in."

"But his valise is gone, and the bands around the money — "

"Were as he left them. I can swear I touched absolutely nothing," answered Benedicto Lupez, earnestly.

Larry was nonplussed. Had the Spaniard looked less of a villain, the young sailor would have been inclined to believe him. But that face was so crafty and calculating that he still hesitated.

"Well, if you are innocent, you will not object to helping me rejoin our soldiers," he ventured.

"I want nothing to do with the *Americanos*, — they mean to get me into trouble, even though I am innocent," growled Benedicto Lupez. "Come, José, we will go," he added to his brother, in their native language.

His brother was already at the doorway. The shouting and firing outside was increasing. Leaping forward, Larry caught Benedicto Lupez by the arm.

"You'll stay here," he began, when the Spaniard let out a heavy blow which hurled the young sailor flat.

"I will not be held by a boy!" cried the man. "Let go, do you hear?" For Larry had caught him by the foot. The boy's hold was good, and in a trice Benedicto Lupez lay flat on his back. Then he rolled over and over and a fierce tussle ensued, which came to a sudden end when José Lupez leaped forward and kicked Larry in the head, rendering him partly unconscious.

What followed was more like a dream than reality to the bruised youth. He heard a confused murmur of voices and a dozen or more shots, and then, as

Benedicto Lupez and his brother ran off, several rebels swarmed into the hut, one stumbling over the lad's form and pitching headlong. This insurgent was about to knife Larry when he saw that the young sailor's eyes were closed, and that he was bleeding about the head.

"*Un Americano*, and wounded," he said, speaking in the Tagalog dialect. "If he lives, he may make us a useful prisoner;" and a few minutes later Larry felt himself picked up and borne away, first in a man's arms and then on horseback. He tried to "locate" himself, but when he opened his eyes all went swimming before them, and he was glad enough to sink back once more and shut out the swirling sight.

On and on, and still on went the rebels, some on foot and a few on their steeds. In front were a few wagons and caribao carts piled high with camping outfits, and also one or two light guns — all that had been saved from the garrison. General Lawton's attack had been a brilliant success, and Santa Cruz itself had surrendered with hardly the loss of a man to the Americans. The troops coming in did their best to round up the insurgents, but they had scattered in all directions and only a few were caught,

and these swore that they were *amigos*, or friends, and had to be given their liberty. This pretending to be friends after they were routed was a great trick with thousands of the natives. They would come into the American camp under the pretext that they had just escaped from the insurgents who had threatened to kill them if they would not join Aguinaldo's forces. What to do with such people was one of the most difficult problems of the rebellion. They could not be placed under arrest, and yet that is what nine out of ten deserved.

When Larry was once more himself he found that it was night. He was in a heap in a large casco which several Tagals were propelling with all speed across the Laguna de Bay. There were several other cascos in front and behind, all filled with natives with guns. The entire procession moved along in almost utter silence.

The youth wanted to know where he was being taken, but no sooner did he open his mouth than one of the soldiers clapped a dirty hand over it and commanded him to be silent. As the soldier carried a bolo in his hand, Larry considered "discretion the better part of valor," and for the time being, held his peace.

A swarm of mosquitoes soon told the boy that they were approaching a marsh, and presently the casco ran in between the reeds and under some high, overhanging tropical bushes. Then those on board leaped ashore, and the youth was made to follow them.

A weary tramp over the marsh and then up a high hill followed. The hill was covered with wild plantains, monstrous ferns, and a species of cedar tree, all thickly interlaced with the ever present tropical vines, which crossed and recrossed the tortuous path the party was following. Overhead the stars shone down dimly, while the forest was filled with the cries of the birds, the chattering of an occasional monkey, and the constant drone and chirp of the innumerable insects. The path was uneven, and more than once Larry pitched into a hollow along with the Tagal who accompanied him and who never let go his hold on the youthful prisoner.

At last they came to a halt before a series of rocks. Here there was a rude cave, partly concealed by bushes. As the party halted, several natives came from the cave to give them welcome. There was no doubt but that this was a rendezvous well known to the insurgents.

"A prisoner is it?" said one of the natives, coming forward and holding up a torch of pitch. "A mere boy. Bah, Lanza, cannot you do better?"

"He was with the soldiers who took Santa Cruz, and he wears the cap from a warship," replied Lanza. "It may be we can get more out of him than out of somebody older."

"Well, perhaps; but I would rather you had brought in a man," was the brief response.

The conversation was in the Tagalog dialect, and consequently Larry did not understand a word of it. The boy was made to march into the cave, which he found to be much larger than he expected. It was fully forty feet broad by sixty feet deep, and at the farther end a bright fire was burning, the blaze mounting high up in a natural chimney and rendering the surroundings as light almost as day.

On coming to his senses, the youth's hands had been bound behind him, and now he was made to sit down with his back against a fair-sized tree trunk which had been dragged into the cave for firewood. A rope was passed around the log and this in turn was fastened to the cord about his wrists, thus making him a close prisoner.

For several hours the rebels paid but scant atten-

tion to him, further than to furnish him a bowl of rice "pap," from which he might sup while it was held to his lips. They also gave him a drink of water, and one young rebel considerately washed the wound on his head, on which the blood had dried, presenting anything but a pleasant sight.

As the hours went by the rebels around the cave kept increasing in numbers until there were several hundred all told. Those who came in last told of the complete downfall of Santa Cruz, but none of them had the least idea of what the Americans were going to do next. "Perhaps they will follow us to here," said one, grimly.

"No, they know better than to follow us into the jungles and mountains," said the leader, Fipile. "If they did that, we could shoot them down like so many monkeys." They had still to learn the true character of the tireless general who had now taken up their trail, and who knew no such words as fear or failure.

It was well toward noon of the day following when Captain Fipile came in to have a talk with Larry. He spoke English remarkably well, for he had spent several years of his life in San Francisco, and in Hong Kong among the English located at that port.

"Your name, my boy," he said, sitting down beside the young tar. And when Larry had given it, he continued, "You were with the American troops who carried Santa Cruz?"

"I was, sir, although I got into the city before they did."

"Indeed, and how was that?" questioned the Filipino leader, and Larry told as much of his story as he deemed necessary.

To the tale Captain Fipile listened with interest, even smiling when Larry told how he had broken out of the prison. "You did wonderfully well for a boy," he remarked. "A man could not have done more. What became of your friend?"

"I left him at the warehouse. I hope he rejoined the soldiers."

"And what of Señors Benedicto and José Lupez?"

"I don't know what became of them."

"I know this José Lupez fairly well, and I always thought him an honest man." Captain Fipile stroked his chin thoughtfully. "We are fighting you Americans, it is true, but we would not wish to shelter a thief who had run away from among you. We are above that, even though a good many of your countrymen will not give us credit for it."

"We know that some of the Filipinos are honest enough," said Larry, hesitatingly. "What do you intend to do with me?" he went on, after a pause.

"That remains to be seen. Would you like to join our army?"

"Me? No, sir!" cried the youth, promptly.

Captain Fipile laughed outright. "You are honest enough about it, I must say. How about giving us a little information? Will you object to that?"

"I have given you considerable information already."

"I mean military information."

"I haven't anything to say on that point."

"Can't I persuade you to tell me what you may happen to know?"

"No, sir."

"If I can get you to talk, it may go much easier with you while you remain our prisoner," went on the captain, suggestively.

"I'm sorry, but I haven't anything to say."

"Very well, then, Master Russell, if you are rather harshly treated in the future, remember you have only yourself to blame. As a general rule, we take prisoners only for the purpose of squeezing what information we can out of them."

And thus speaking, Captain Fipile arose and quitted the cave, leaving Larry to his own reflections, which were more dismal than they were encouraging.

CHAPTER IX

THE ADVANCE INTO THE JUNGLE

SANTA CRUZ had been taken, but there was still much to do around the shores of the Laguna de Bay to make it safe territory for the Americans to hold. From the city the rebels were pursued eastward, and a number of cascos and larger boats were captured. Inside of a few days Paete, Longos, Lumban, and several other villages, were visited by detachments of General Lawton's command, and the insurgents fled in each instance, leaving all behind them. Nearly a hundred who stopped to fight were either killed or wounded, and victory was entirely upon the side of the Americans.

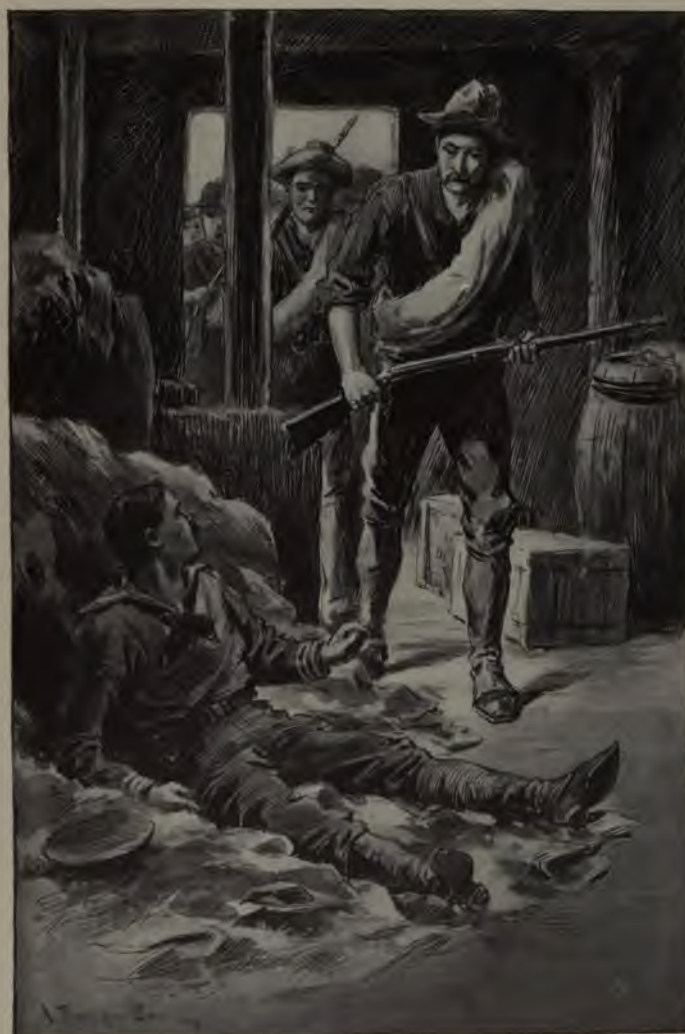
But now it was learned that the forces under General Aguinaldo and General Luna were concentrating once more to the north and east of Malolos, and much as he regretted the necessity, General Otis was compelled to order General Lawton and his command back to the territory above

Manila. No garrisons could be spared for Santa Cruz, or the other places captured, so these settlements were allowed to fall once more into the hands of the enemy, after all the fortifications had been destroyed and the arms and munitions of war confiscated. It seemed a pity to leave these towns and villages after having once taken them, but to garrison them properly would, according to General Lawton's estimate, have taken thousands of soldiers.

With the taking of Santa Cruz, the Americans marched through all the streets and by-ways, looking for lurking rebels and hidden arms, and in this search a squad of infantry came upon Luke Striker, who had propped himself up on the sacking in the warehouse and was making himself as comfortable as possible.

"Hullo, sailor," cried the sergeant in charge of the squad. "Where did you come from?"

Luke's story was quickly told, and he begged the soldier to look for Larry, fearing that serious harm had befallen the lad. At once two soldiers were detailed to care for the old Yankee, while the rest went on a hunt which lasted far into the night.



"Hullo, sailor, where did you come from?" — *Page 82.*

As we know, nothing was seen of Larry; but from a wounded and dying Filipino, the soldiers learned that the boy had been taken a prisoner, and must now be many miles away from the city. News of this reached Luke while he was in the temporary hospital opened up after the first fight, and the information made the old fellow feel as bad as did his wound.

"If they've captured him, he's a goner, I'm afraid," he said to Jack Biddle, who had come in to help look after his messmate. "Poor Larry! What will his brother Ben say, when he hears of it?"

"Better not tell him right away," suggested Biddle. "Give him a chance to get strong fust. Besides, Larry may give 'em the slip. He's putty cute, ye know."

The news soon spread that Larry and several others were missing, and a description of the absent ones was given out. The next day one of the missing soldiers was found dead in the jungle, but nothing was learned of the others.

"It serves the young sailor right," growled Lieutenant Horitz. "He knew too much for his own good." He had not forgotten the disaster on the

river, and secretly he wished Larry all manner of ill-luck. During the rush through the woods the Lieutenant had tumbled and struck his nose on a stone. That member was much swollen and cut in consequence, and this put him in a worse humor than ever before.

By the time the expedition was to return to Manila, Luke was able to walk around again, and he was put on one of the larger boats and Jack Biddle was detailed to look after him. The return to Manila was made without special incident, and two days later found Luke on board the *Olympia* among all his old friends.

But the Yankee tar was thoroughly out of sorts. "I wouldn't care for the wound at all, if only I knew Larry was safe," he was wont to say a dozen times a day. Barrow, Castleton, and all the boy's old friends were likewise troubled because of his strange disappearance.

It was Jack Biddle who got shore leave and travelled up to Malolos to break the news to Ben. He found the acting captain of Company D just preparing to take his place in the command once more.

"I'm glad to see you lookin' well, leftenant,"

he said, after shaking hands warmly. "Ye look almost as healthy as ye did on the voyage from Brooklyn to Manila."

"And I feel almost as well," replied Ben. "The rest has done me a world of good. But what brought you up, Jack? Did Larry come with you?"

"No, Larry didn't come," stammered the old tar, and looked down at the floor. "Fact is, leftenant, Larry — he — he couldn't come."

"Couldn't come? Why, what's the matter?" cried Ben, quickly. "Is he sick?"

"I reckon not — leas'wise, I don't know. Fact is, leftenant, none on us know. Ye see, he went upon thet Santa Cruz expedition — "

"Yes, yes, I know that. And what of it? Was he — was he — " Ben could not utter the words which came to his mind.

"No, he wasn't shot, thet is, so far as we know. But he's — well, he's missin', an' we can't find hide nor hair o' him anywhere. I might ez well tell ye fust ez last, though it cuts my heart to do it, leftenant." And Jack Biddle shook his head dubiously.

It was a great shock to Ben, yet he stood it

better than the old tar had expected. He asked immediately for details, and though he drank in every word his manner showed that his thoughts were far away.

"I wish I had been along," he said bitterly. "If he wasn't killed, the Filipinos must have carried him off a pretty good distance. I wonder if General Lawton tried to find out anything under a flag of truce."

"Everything that could be done was done — I have Captain Gaston's word on that," answered Jack Biddle. Captain Gaston and Ben were well known to each other.

Ben sank down on a bench, and for several minutes said not a word, but the tears stood in his eyes, tears which he hastily dried that nobody might see them. Then Gilbert Pennington came in, to tell him that the regiment was ordered to move within the hour.

"It's too bad!" declared the young Southerner. "But brace up, Ben, 'While there is life there is hope,' and it's a pretty sure thing that he wasn't killed." And with this ray of comfort Ben had to be content.

During the days that General Lawton had been

in the vicinity of the Laguna de Bay, the regiment to which Ben and Gilbert belonged had not been idle. With a number of other troops they started for the town of Santa Maria, where they came upon the enemy and dislodged them with shells. The town, already in flames, was allowed to burn, and the Americans pursued the rebels quite a distance into the mountains, but failed to catch them.

In the meantime the camp of the Third Artillery, situated some distance to the west of Malolos, was attacked. A fierce engagement in the swamps took place, and in the end the rebels were driven northward and began then to concentrate at Tarlac, which soon became one of their new capitals — they shifting the seat of government as often as it suited their convenience.

It was now felt by General Otis and others in command that no time should be lost in an endeavor to round up the insurgents to the north of Malolos, who were the main support of the rebellion, although scattering bands were still operating to the south and southeast. The rainy season was but a few weeks off, and once this set in military operations would be much retarded, if

not stopped altogether, for, taken as a whole, the roads throughout the Island of Luzon are bad, and heavy rains render them well-nigh impassable.

In order to make the campaign against the rebels as effective as possible, General Otis decided to send out two columns, one under General MacArthur to strike out for Calumpit, and the second, under General Lawton, to take a route to the eastward, along the base of the hills leading to San Isidro. By this it was hoped, if the rebels at Calumpit were defeated and tried to take to the mountains, they would fall directly into Lawton's hands, and not only have to surrender but also give up all their war supplies.

It was in the furtherance of this plan that General Lawton left Manila with his brigade and struck out for Novaliches which was gained after a small skirmish at Tuliahan River. From here the column moved to Norzagaray to await reënforcements which were coming in from Malolos and vicinity. To these reënforcements belonged the command to which Ben and Gilbert were attached.

It had begun to rain, and those who understood tropical weather predicted that the wet season was at hand. Yet it was very hot, and the water

which fell arose in clouds of steam on the road, rendering marching anything but comfortable.

"Sure, an' it makes a man feel as if he was takin' a stame bath, so it does," remarked Dan Casey, as he swung along on the route step. "I don't know as I iver see it rain hot wather before, bedad," he added, as he wiped the perspiration from his sadly freckled face.

During the day's march, which was trying to everybody, Ben was silent, wondering what had become of Larry and if he would ever again see his younger brother. When the command went into camp under the shelter of a grove of tall trees, both Gilbert and Major Morris visited his tent to comfort him.

"He is not the only one who is missing," remarked the major of the first battalion. "So far I understand the warships have lost about a dozen men who went ashore and failed to return. And you know there are six men missing from our own regiment."

"That is true, major," was the acting captain's answer. "But it's only when it's a close relative that the blow really comes home to one, you know."

"I suppose that is true, captain. But don't be

disheartened. It may be that your brother is already back at Manila."

"I can't see what the rebels would do with him as a prisoner," said Gilbert. "They have to move around so lively that I can't see what they want with prisoners anyway."

And so the talk ran on until it came time to retire. That night Ben slept but little, and it was not the rain or the aching of his wound that kept him awake either. He was bound to think of Larry constantly until something was heard of the missing lad.

CHAPTER X

THE TAKING OF ANGAT

"WE are out for a fight to-day."

It was Sergeant Gilmore who spoke, and he addressed Ben. The sergeant was still acting as first lieutenant of Company D, and it looked as if he might hold the position permanently. As for Ben, it was settled that he would be appointed permanent captain of the command as soon as the necessary papers could be made out.

The regiment had joined General Lawton's command and was now in the vicinity of Angat, a pretty town, full of quaint buildings, and a place which, as yet, the rebellion had scarcely touched. But the insurgents had been developed in force by the sharpshooters in front, and now a constant rattle of musketry was heard, which made Ben's blood tingle as of old, when the cry had been, "On to Santiago!" and "On to Malolos!"

"Yes, you are right, Gilmore," answered the

young captain. "And I am not sorry. It will help us to forget the rain and our other discomforts." Ben did not say it would help him to forget about Larry, but that is what he meant.

The regiment was soon advancing on the double-quick. It was spread out in skirmish order, and the route lay over what had once been a rice-field, but which was but little more than a sheet of dirty water four to eight inches deep. Here and there were holes, and into these some of the soldiers would sometimes step, thus getting an involuntary bath, much to their disgust.

"It ain't all a picnic," remarked one of the unfortunates, as he leaped up out of a hole and shook himself like a big dog. "Folks at home as just read the newspaper accounts of the war don't know anything of what us fellows have to put up with. All they think we do is to rush forward, kill the enemy, and cover ourselves with glory. I'll wager some of 'em would put on a mighty sour face if they had to tramp ten or twenty miles in the mud and wet, carry a gun and other luggage, and hardly knowing when the next meal was going to turn up and what it was going to amount to."

"Oh, you've got 'em bad, Bradner!" shouted a

comrade. "Here, light my pipe and take a smoke. It will dry off your nose if nothing else." And Bradner took the pipe and was thankful that tobacco, at least, was still forthcoming.

Half an hour later Ben received orders to take his company up to the firing line, and away went the command on the double-quick, with the young captain at the head. The rain had let up a bit, and the rebels could be seen making a stand behind a grove of half-wild plantains, where were located a score of nipa huts.

"Run them out, boys!" shouted Ben, as they drew closer. "If we go at them with a rush we'll soon have them on the run!" And on swept the company, with orders to fire at will. Soon there was a constant cracking of rifles, and Ben and the other officers joined in with their pistols. The insurgents fired in return, and one man of the company fell back, hit in the arm.

Just before the grove was gained there was a brook to cross. This was much swollen, and here a number of the soldiers came to a halt, fearing that fording was out of the question.

"Don't stop!" came in a loud cry from Major Morris. "You can leap the stream easily enough.

Come, I'm going!" And over he went with a bound, and a score of soldiers followed. A raking fire came from the nipa huts, but now the rebels were seen to be fleeing. The Americans answered the fire with volley after volley from their own guns, and the huts were surrounded as quickly as possible.

"Captain Russell, you will take the trail to the left," said an orderly, dashing up. "Major Morris will rejoin you at the fork in the road."

"The trail to the left," repeated Ben, and turned to his company. "Forward, boys, — left oblique!" he shouted, and on they went again, past the nipa huts and down a trail leading along the edge of a rich plantation. Several more huts were passed, but the inmates were nothing but women and children, and offered no resistance. Then at a distance could be seen a stone wall, as if the insurgents had endeavored to construct a rude fortification in a great hurry.

The company was going at the stone wall pell-mell when Ben called a sudden halt. "To the right, boys, and come at the end of the wall," were his orders, and the command swept around as desired.

Bang! The report was hardly expected, and with it half a dozen of the stones composing the rude fortification gave way, disclosing a cannon made of a bored-out tree-trunk, wound round and round with telegraph wire stolen from the lines along the railroad. This wooden cannon had been heavily charged with cartridges, old nails, and bits of iron, and the first discharge rent the mouth into a dozen pieces.

"That was a narrow shave!" cried Gilmore, as he and Ben looked around, to find all the company unharmed. "Who ever supposed the rascals would put up such a job as that on us?"

"They'll do anything," replied the young captain. "But that isn't a new idea. Wooden cannons were used in the Civil War, so I've been told."

With the discharge of the wooden gun, the rebels concealed behind the stone fortification had fled. The Americans now made after them, more "hot-footed" than ever, and the incessant crack of firearms was followed by many a groan and yell of pain as over a dozen Filipinos went down, three to their death.

At the fork mentioned by Major Morris, Ben

brought his company to a halt. All were panting for breath, for the brush at close quarters had put them on their mettle. The rest of the battalion soon came up, and the other battalions followed, from another road, and then the regiment, with the other troops, pushed on into Angat.

Much to the astonishment of all, the beautiful town, with its century-old churches and quaint government buildings, was found practically deserted. The only inhabitants left were a few women and a handful of aged men, all of whom said they would do anything for the *Americanos* if they were spared their lives. These frightened people were soon put at ease, and then an inspection of the captured place was instituted.

In various places, such as the vaults of convents and government buildings, huge quantities of *pilai*, that is, unhulled rice, were found. Some of the rice was confiscated for army use, and a large quantity was distributed to the natives who gradually drifted in, saying they wanted to be friendly, and that they were starving.

"It may be that the rice we give away may go to the rebels," said the general in command. "But we can't let these poor wretches starve, war or no

war;" and so the bags were given out until very little remained.

It was not General Lawton's intention to quarter at Angat for any length of time, and, having entered the town in the morning, he left it in the afternoon, to begin an advance up the river the next day, striking San Rafael on the right bank and Muronco on the left bank.

"Somebody has set Angat on fire!" exclaimed Ben, as the regiment marched away. A thick column of smoke had suddenly risen from the upper end of the town.

"I don't believe it was our men," answered Major Morris, who walked beside the young captain. "They had strict orders not to loot or burn."

The flames speedily increased, as one nipa hut after another caught, and the warehouses added to the blaze. The Americans always thought the rebels started this conflagration, while the insurgents laid the crime at our door. However it was, Angat burned fiercely, and by nightfall little remained of its many picturesque buildings.

The weather was beginning to tell upon the troops, and out of Ben's regiment fully forty men

were on the sick list, with either colds or tropical fever, and these had to be sent back to a sick camp. The balance of the command, it was decided, should join the troops that were to attack San Rafael.

As before, the sharpshooters were in front, while the infantry were escorted by Scott's battery, who, as soon as the enemy's firing line was located, began to pour in a hot fire of shrapnel, much to the latter's discomfiture. Then Ben's regiment went into action once more, the young captain's company on the edge of some heavy brush.

The sharp clip, clip of Mauser bullets made unpleasant music as the soldier boys rushed through the thickets, to surprise not a few Filipinos who were in hiding, and who imagined that the Americans would pass them by unnoticed. Once Ben came upon a man lying on his face in a mass of tall grass, every part of his body concealed but his back.

"Can he be dead?" thought the young captain, when of a sudden the native leaped up like lightning and darted behind the nearest bushes before anybody could stop him. Half a dozen soldiers fired on him, and he fired in return, but none of

the shots took effect; and Ben could not but think that the poor creature had earned his escape. "For ten chances to one he doesn't know what he is fighting about," he said to Gilmore.

"Right you are," answered the lieutenant. "I believe if we could corral the whole crowd and explain the true situation to them, they would throw down their arms without hesitation. It is only the leaders who are keeping this rebellion alive."

Over near the battery just mentioned stood General Lawton, tall and erect, directing every movement, without a single thought of personal danger. Many a shot was directed at him, but he seemed to bear a charmed life.

"San Rafael will soon be ours," said one of the officers of the staff. "See, the enemy are retreating!" he cried enthusiastically.

At that moment an orderly dashed up, carrying an order from General Otis. The order read that the column must rest at Angat until supplies could be forwarded from Malolos. A shadow fell over the commander's face. Another victory was at hand — but orders were orders, and must be obeyed. Slowly the retreat was sounded, and the insurgents

were left in possession of the field. They thought the Americans were being forced back on account of a heavy loss, and went almost wild with delight, proclaiming the encounter a great victory for the Filipino cause.

CHAPTER XI

THE CROSSING OF THE RIO GRANDE RIVER

"FOR gracious' sake, what did we want to retreat for?" demanded Ben, as soon as the command halted and Major Morris had come within speaking distance. The young captain had been at the very front of the firing line, and had seen that complete victory was only the work of a quarter of an hour or less.

"Orders from general headquarters," replied the major, in a low tone. "I fancy the staff is pretty angry, too," he added.

"We could have whipped them with ease."

"So we could, captain, but—" And Major Morris finished with a shrug of his shoulders which meant a good deal.

"I don't believe General Otis would have given such an order had he been here to see what was going on," continued Ben, earnestly.

"Well, we're ordered back to Angat, and that

is all there is to it. The army must have supplies, you know."

"Hang the supplies!" muttered Gilmore, but under his breath. "We can get all the supplies we want as we go along." And Ben was rather inclined to agree with him.

There was no help, however, for the turn in the situation; and with crestfallen faces the soldiers moved still further back and went into temporary camp. Only a few had suffered, and the wounded ones were promptly cared for by the hospital corps.

"And how do you feel?" asked Gilbert, as he came up to see Ben. "Does the wound hurt still?"

"It itches, that's all," answered Ben. "But this retreat —"

"Makes one feel sore all over, doesn't it?" finished the young Southerner. "I must say I don't understand it at all. If we are going to round up any of these rebels, we can't do it by falling back and waiting for supplies."

Impatient as they were, however, the troops had to wait for two days before another movement was made. During this time supplies were hurried forward in large quantities, that there might be no more delays in the future.

In the meantime the troops under General MacArthur were by no means idle. They consisted of two brigades, that of General Hale on the right wing, and that of General Wheaton on the left wing. Of these troops the first advance was by some men of the Fourth Cavalry, who went forward to reconnoitre the enemy's position near Quingua. The start was made during the early morning, and before long the insurgents opened a heavy fire which the Americans returned with difficulty, as the rebels were well concealed by the tall grass and their intrenchments. To aid the cavalry a number of other troops were hurried forward, also several field-pieces; and in the end the Filipinos were forced from their position, with a heavy loss. In this battle the Americans lost six killed and forty wounded. Among the killed was Colonel Stotsenburg, commanding the First Nebraska Volunteers, who, after most gallantly leading his men, was shot down in the final rush upon the enemy's earthworks.

From Quingua the whole of General Hale's brigade moved down the Quingua River to Pulilan. Here no resistance was encountered, and after a brief rest the brigade pushed on toward Logundi.

That town was not yet reached when the advance guard reported a breastwork across the main road, running to the river on the west and into the jungle on the east.

"Never mind, we'll go ahead anyhow!" shouted the soldiers of the Nebraska regiment; and go ahead they did, with the South Dakota and Iowa troops beside them, and several guns of the Sixth Artillery protecting their advance. The fight at the earthworks was a fierce one, some of the Filipinos refusing to surrender even when they knew they were beaten; and as a consequence many of them were slain whose lives might otherwise have been spared to them.

A short distance to the northwest of Logundi, the Quingua and the Bagbag rivers join in flowing into the Calumpit. The railroad crosses the Bagbag but a short distance away, and at this point General Hale's command reunited with that of General Wheaton, which had come up along the tracks from Malolos without difficulty. General Wheaton had with him the troops from Montana and Kansas, some Utah artillery, and one or two other commands, along with two armored cars, fitted out with Gatling and Hotchkiss guns and six-pounders.

It was soon discovered that the rebels had built strong breastworks in a semicircle along the north bank of the Bagbag and the western bank of the Calumpit Rivers, and had injured the railroad track for a distance of several hundred yards, and also the bridge spanning the river. As the approach to both rivers was largely an open one, how to dislodge the Filipinos became a serious problem.

"Forward with the armored cars!" was the cry, and they were rushed ahead as far as the torn-up condition of the railroad tracks admitted. A cannonading lasting for half an hour followed, in which one of the batteries on the highway also took part. The aim of the gunners was good, and soon the insurgents were seen to be pouring from the trenches, which were getting too hot to hold them. Yet a fair number held their ground, and when the troops on foot advanced they opened a blistering fire which laid not a few Americans low. But the victory was ours, and soon the followers of Old Glory were wading or swimming the river, while the engineering corps set to work to repair the damage done to railroad and bridge, so that the armored and baggage cars might pass through.

The cry was now, "On to Calumpit!" which

town lies on the Calumpit River, and is divided into two parts by another stream, called the Rio Grande. It was found that the insurgents had practically deserted the lower half of the town, but had intrenchments on the upper bank of the Rio Grande which were even more formidable than those taken on the Bagbag. Here the rebels had also a Maxim and other guns, and it seemed as if for once the advance of the Americans was thoroughly blocked. Numerous good positions along the south bank of the river were held by our troops, but it looked as if they could not get over the stream without a tremendous loss of life.

It is said that the opportunity makes the man, and in this instance the saying proved a true one. With the soldiers under General Wheaton were the Twentieth Kansas Volunteers, who had already made a record for themselves at Malolos and elsewhere, as related in a previous volume of this series. They were commanded by Colonel Frederick Funston, a man comparatively young in years and small in stature, but one who was daring to the last degree, and who had seen much of fighting and hardships during his adventurous existence. In Cuba, Funston had fought most valiantly under

Garcia for Cuban liberty long before any interference by the United States.

To Colonel, afterward Brigadier General, Funston belongs the honor of the passage of the Rio Grande, for it was he who planned what was done, and he and a score of his fighting Kansans who carried it out. The daring of the scheme is one which will live long in American history.

As before mentioned, the bridge was partly broken, but enough remained for the passage of soldiers who could climb from one iron cross-section to another. At first it was hoped that a body might go over the bridge in the dark, raise a great commotion, and cause the Filipinos a panic. This scheme was tried, but it failed; for the enemy was on strict guard, and would have shot down the men as rapidly as they appeared on the bridge.

Colonel Funston then proposed to go down the river bank for a considerable distance, build rafts, and, by means of a stout rope, ferry some of the best of his men across the stream in the dark. The landing of the men was to be covered by the heaviest possible fire from the American side, and, as soon as they were safe ashore, the Kansas soldiers were to secure some position where they might enfilade the

enemy's trenches, that is, fire through them from one end, so that the Filipinos might no longer find them safe. In the meantime more troops were to come over with all possible speed.

On the way down the stream the Kansas soldiers demolished several huts, selecting the best of the timber with which to build their rafts. The moon was under a cloud, and it looked as if they might get across the river without serious trouble.

But as the crowd were constructing their rafts and getting their ferry rope ready for use, the moon came out brightly; and very soon the insurgents became suspicious and fired on the Americans, who were forced to retreat to the nearest shelter. The firing kept up the greater part of two hours, and at last the plan to cross over that night was abandoned.

But the Kansas colonel and his gallant men had determined to be the first into the enemy's camp, and once again they went to the spot previously selected, but this time in the broad daylight, when they might clearly see the shore opposite. No insurgents were in sight; and, after having made three rafts all right and tight, the rope was brought forth, and two men, named White and Trembly,

were asked to carry it across the stream. The soldiers plunged into the water without delay, being watched by hundreds of their comrades left behind. The men were without their uniforms or weapons of any kind.

Slowly the pair swam the turbulent waters of the stream, and hardly had they gotten fifty feet from shore when the rebels opened fire upon them, at first a few scattering shots and then a perfect volley. That the swimmers escaped is little short of a miracle. But they remained untouched, and, gaining the opposite bank, they ran forward and tied the rope's end to a tree-stump. In the meantime two other soldiers started over the Rio Grande in a dugout, but this upset and let the men into the water, and they had to swim as had the others. But they landed with their guns intact, and at once opened fire at the nearest natives that showed themselves.

All this had happened with great rapidity, and now the first raft was coming across the river, loaded with Kansas soldiers officered by Colonel Funston himself. The raft became the target for the hottest kind of fire, and as the ferrying had to be done by the soldiers pulling along the rope stretched from shore to shore, the passage was as slow as it was dan-

gerous. But the soldiers on the craft went over in safety, and soon more followed, until over fifty were on the beach fronting the enemy's intrenchments. Then, with a wild yelling, to give the rebels the impression that a large body had come over, they pushed forward to enfilade the enemy's trenches as first proposed.

But now another difficulty arose. There was a small stream flowing into the Rio Grande near this spot, and this had to be crossed before the fire of the Americans could be made effective. How to get across was a problem, as the insurgents had a machine gun trained on the spot. This worked for a while and then stopped; and in the lull Colonel Funston secured a rowboat and went over with some of his men, and the others soon followed.

The Filipinos were now thoroughly frightened, for the Americans were making a great outcry down by the railroad bridge, and they imagined that they were to be attacked from several points at once. Some started to run, and as soon as Colonel Funston's men began to rain their bullets into the long trenches, more followed, until the enemy was in a panic. Then the Americans began to cross the bridge and stream in great numbers, and the Filipinos, although

reënforced by a body of Macabebes just at this time, could not make an effective stand. Calumpit was left behind, and a running fight ensued which ended at Apalit, when a violent tropical thunderstorm put an end to the day's operations. It was thought that the rebels' headquarters would be found at Apalit; but this had, at the last moment, been removed to San Isidro, toward which General Lawton was now advancing.

CHAPTER XII

SOMETHING ABOUT A POISONED WELL

AFTER the rest at Angat, the taking of San Rafael by General Lawton's troops was an easy matter, and on May 1 — the anniversary of Admiral Dewey's great victory in Manila Bay — the soldiers set out for the town of Baliuag, five miles to the northward.

In spite of the recent rain, the road was hard and even dusty in spots. The heat was still as great as ever, and Ben was glad to take the benefit of any shade that afforded itself as he marched along at the head of his command. The date made him think of the battle just mentioned, and this brought him around to Larry once more, and he began to wonder if his brother would ever turn up again.

"I suppose I'll have to write to Walter and to Uncle Job about this," he muttered dismally. "But I hate to do it, especially if Larry does turn up, for I know it will worry both of them greatly."

The road was thick with palms and plantains and

trailing plants, the latter of gorgeous colorings. Nipa huts and bamboo cottages were numerous, but the inmates kept themselves well hidden as the little army passed by. In the distance were paddy-fields and cane-brakes, and along the road were numerous mud-holes, some of which had to be bridged over before the artillery could pass in safety. More than once horses and cannon got stuck, and many a shoulder had to be put to the pieces to budge them.

"If there was no war, this would be a delightful spot in which to spend a vacation," remarked Gilbert, who had come up for a little talk, as was his habit when they were pushing ahead in irregular formation. "I reckon the natives take solid comfort in their homes."

"I suppose it puts you in mind of the South at home," returned Ben, with a smile. "It is nice, certainly. But I fancy this continual heat would make one mighty lazy in time."

"Well, the natives are lazy, you can easily see that," laughed the young Southerner. "I wish I could get a good drink of water," he added, a minute later.

They soon came to a pretty dwelling, set in a perfect wilderness of flowers and shrubs. Toward the

side they made out a well, and ran forward to fill their canteens.

The pair were at the well when a shrill cry from one of the side rooms of the house attracted their attention. Looking up, they saw a native girl waving her hand frantically at them. The girl was nicely dressed and evidently belonged to the better classes.

"We only want a drink!" shouted Ben, thinking that the maiden might imagine they had come into the garden to steal.

But the girl shouted more loudly than ever, and waved them away from the well. "Bad! bad!" she cried.

"Oh, no, we are not so bad as you think," Gilbert shouted back; and was about to take a drink from a cocoanut-shell dipper which hung handy, when the girl came out of the cottage on a run and dashed the dipper to the ground. At the same time an evil-looking Filipino appeared at the doorway, shook his fist at the girl, and then suddenly ran for the barns behind the dwelling and disappeared.

"I want a drink and I'm going to have it," began Gilbert, sternly, for he did not like the manner in which the water had been spilt over his clothing. "If you—"

"The well is poisoned! don't drink! it will kill you!"
—Page 115.

"The well is poisoned; don't drink, it will kill you!" gasped the girl, in Spanish.

As old readers know, Gilbert understood a little of the language, having picked it up while on a trip to Cuba, and also while serving as a Rough Rider in that island. He started back and caught the maiden by the arm.

"Poisoned! you are certain?" he cried.

"Yes, señor; my uncle put the poison in only yesterday. He lost much at Angat, and he is very angry at the *Americanos* in consequence. He knew the soldiers were coming this way, and he wanted to poison as many as he could. He put a water-barrel down on the road full of the poisoned water, too."

"Who is your uncle, the man who just ran off?"

"Yes, señor. But, oh, do not go after him, I pray you!" cried the girl, in high alarm. "I would not have spoken, but I could not see you poisoned before my very eyes; no, not that!"

As quickly as he could, Gilbert translated her words to Ben, who listened in amazement.

"The villain!" ejaculated the young captain. "I've heard of this sort of thing being done before. I wonder where that barrel is that she spoke about? We must find it and empty it of its contents."

Gilbert put the question to the girl, who announced that the barrel was on another road back of the plantation. Whether any of the soldiers had reached it or not was a question.

As quickly as he could Ben reported the situation to his superior, and received orders to divide his company, leaving a part to guard the poisoned well so that no Americans might drink from it, while the rest should go and hunt up the water-barrel. Gilbert was detailed to accompany Ben, and the girl was given to understand that she must take the soldiers to where the barrel had been set up.

At first the maiden demurred; but there was no help for it, and the kind smiles which Gilbert and Ben gave her were an assurance that no harm was about to befall her. Yet she was afraid that when the reckoning came her uncle would deal harshly with her, and trembled violently as she moved through the rice-fields with the two young officers beside her.

The little command had nearly reached the back road when the report of a gun rang out, coming from the direction of a wood behind the rice-fields. The bullet sped past Ben's shoulder, to bury itself in the fleshy part of one of his private's arms.

"'Tis my uncle!" cried the girl. "Oh, he will kill us all, I am sure of it!" And she became so agitated that she sank down and could not go another step.

Without hesitation, Ben ordered his men forward on the run, and away went the detachment for the spot from whence the unexpected shot had come. As the soldiers neared the wood they beheld a Filipino in the act of running across a small opening.

"That's him, the rascal!" roared Dan Casey, and taking a hasty aim he fired, and the rebel was seen to plunge forward on his face. When the party came up they found that the man had been hit in the hip, and that the wound, while not necessarily dangerous, was serious, and would put the fellow out of the contest for several months.

"It serves him right," said Ben. "Poisoning drinking water is not fair fighting."

The girl soon came up, crying bitterly. She wished to remain by her uncle, but Ben made her understand that she must point out the water-barrel first, and after that he would have two soldiers remove the wounded man to the cottage.

Ten minutes later the rear road was gained, and here the water-barrel was found, set up on end, with

the top knocked out. It was three-quarters full of water, and a dozen or more soldiers were drinking and filling their canteens.

"Stop drinking!" ordered Ben, when still at a distance. "That water has been doctored and will make you sick." He refrained from saying the water was poisoned for fear of creating a panic.

The water was at once poured out on the ground and the barrel smashed up. Then a surgeon was found, to whom Ben related the facts of the case. A canteen of the water was examined, and the surgeon decided to give the man who had drunk the stuff an emetic. A few of the soldiers were taken with cramps inside of an hour afterward, and two of them were seriously sick for a week; but no lives were lost. But if the soldiers could have got at the Filipino who had poisoned the water, they would have shot him on the spot.

As soon as the danger was over, Ben returned to the wood, and had two men carry the wounded man back to the cottage, where he was left in charge of his wife and his niece. Through Gilbert it was learned that the wife had also remonstrated against using the poison, so it was fair to suppose that the aunt would protect her niece to a certain degree. "But

she'll have a hard time of it for doing us a service, I'm afraid," said the young Southerner, as he and Ben resumed the march.

The scouts, under Chief Young, were in advance, and now a steady firing from the front told that another battle was at hand. Soon General Lawton came dashing through the crowd on the road, followed by his staff.

"Forward, boys!" was the cry, and then Ben's command left the road and took to the rice-fields on the outskirts of Baliuag. The line was a long one, with the Oregon and Minnesota soldiers forming the skirmishing end, and Scott's battery in a paddy-field on the extreme right. So far the insurgents had kept well hidden; but as the Americans drew closer to the town they could be seen running in half a dozen directions, as if undecided whether to fight or to flee.

The townspeople themselves were in a panic, and down the streets ran Filipinos and Chinese, some with their household effects piled high on their backs. They had heard of the coming of the *Americanos*, but had hoped almost against hope that their beloved town would be passed by unmolested.

Ben's regiment was moving along rapidly when

they came to a ditch which seemed to divide the rice-field in half. A short pause followed, when along came the cry of "Down!" and every man dropped, and none too soon, for the insurgents had opened up unexpectedly from a cane-brake behind the rice-field.

"We must take that cane-brake," came the order from the colonel, and the word was passed along quickly, and away went the companies with a ringing cheer, firing as they ran, and reloading with all possible speed.

Ben was now truly in his element, and, waving his sword, he urged Company D well to the front, so that the cane was soon reached. But the rebels were not game for a hand-to-hand encounter and fled once more, through the cane and over a field of heavy grass leading to the very outskirts of the town beyond.

"They are running away!" was the cry. "On we go, boys, and the town will be ours in less than half an hour."

But now a halt was ordered, on the edge of the cane-brake. From the outskirts of the town appeared a Filipino waving a white rag over his head.

"Flag of truce!" cried the American general. "Cease firing!" And the order was instantly obeyed. "Major Morris, you can select a detail of three men and find out what they want."

"I will, general," answered the major of the first battalion, and saluted. He had soon chosen his men, one of whom was Gilbert Pennington, and, waving a white flag before them, the party of four advanced into the open field.

CHAPTER XIII

IN WHICH A FLAG OF TRUCE IS FIRED UPON

MAJOR MORRIS well knew the wiliness of the Filipinos, yet he did not doubt but that they would pay due respect to a flag of truce which they had themselves invited. Accordingly he advanced boldly with his little party, until the four had covered fully one-half of the distance which separated the American troops from the point where the rebels had taken a stand.

"He is thrustin' thim a whole lot!" groaned Dan Casey, who was the closest man in the ranks to Ben. "If he gits plugged—"

"They won't dare to fire, Dan," said a companion. "If they did—"

The speech was cut short by the pop of a Mauser rifle, followed by two more pops, and the private who carried the white flag was seen to fling the banner down and fall headlong. In the

meantime, the Filipinos who had appeared with the white rag were running back to their own ranks with all possible speed.

"They have fired on the flag of truce!" The cry arose from a hundred throats, and then a scattering volley rang out. At the same time the Filipinos opened up in a body, and Major Morris, Gilbert, and the third man were seen to pitch into the tall grass in such a manner that they were almost hidden from view.

"Gilbert is shot! And Major Morris too!" Such was the painful thought which ran through Ben's brain. He looked at the colonel pleadingly.

"Advance at once, Captain Russell, with the first battalion, to the rescue of the flag of truce," ordered the colonel, understanding him fully. "After this, give the enemy no quarter."

"Forward, men, to the rescue!" shouted the young captain, almost before his superior had finished. "Deploy to the left and fire at will. And make every shot tell!" he added bitterly.

"Forward it is!" shouted Dan Casey. "Down wid the haythins that don't know the manin' av honor!" And he led in the rush over the long grass.

The whole line was soon advancing, but Ben's company was in front, and kept there until within a hundred feet of where the four men had gone down. Then, to his amazement, the young captain saw Major Morris leap up, followed by Gilbert and the third soldier, and run with all speed toward the American line.

"Not shot!" cried Ben, joyfully. "Heaven be thanked for that!" And he almost felt like embracing his two friends. Only the flag-bearer had been struck, and he not seriously. The others had gone down in the long grass to destroy the enemy's aim. The wounded flag-carrier was taken to the rear, and then the whole line pushed on with a yell which was as savage as it was loud and long. The incident, short as it was, was not forgotten, and when one end of the American line closed in on the retreating insurgents the latter fought to the last, knowing only too well that little quarter would be given to them because of their perfidy.

The long American line had swung toward Baliuag in a semicircle, and now, when the insurgents tried to flee by way of the north, they found themselves confronted front and rear. This put them in more

of a panic than ever; and had General Lawton had a thousand additional troops, it is more than likely he could have surrounded the rebels completely and compelled every one in that territory to throw down his arms.

But he had not the extra men, nor could he get them. Moreover, he had hardly a decent map of the territory, while the enemy knew every field, every road, and every stream. They could not make a stand at Baliuag, nor could they run in the direction of San Rafael, so their only course was to take to the rice-fields, the cane-brakes, and the jungle, and this they did in short order.

By the time the outskirts of the town was gained Ben's command was almost exhausted; yet the colonel of the regiment felt that now was no time to rest, and company after company was sent out in the hope that some of the scattering bands of insurgents might be rounded up.

"Major Morris, you will take your four companies up yonder road," said the colonel, after receiving orders from General Lawton's orderly, and the head of the regiment pointed out the road in question. Soon the battalion was off on the double-quick, the major more than eager to wipe out the treachery

which had been shown to him and his companions but an hour or two before.

The road which the battalion followed was a winding one, lined with cottages of the better sort, showing that this was a fashionable outskirt of the town. Only a few people showed themselves, and nothing was seen or heard of the insurgents until a quarter of a mile had been covered, and the best of the habitations had been left behind. Then came an unexpected fire from a cane-brake, and out dashed fully two hundred savage-looking Tagals armed with guns and bolos.

"Halt! Fire!" came the commands, and the Americans obeyed as quickly as possible. Several of our men had been hit, one seriously, and now half a dozen Filipinos went down. For several minutes the fighting was at close quarters, and it looked as if the battalion had run into an ambush and were about to be slaughtered.

"To the shelter of the trees!" shouted Ben, and was about to guide his men when a fierce-looking rebel officer leaped before him with drawn sword. His own blade met that of the enemy, and both flashed fire. But the Tagal was a fine swordsman and kept at his work, feeling certain that he could

run the *Americano* through and through. Clack! clack! went the blades, up and down, side to side, and straight forward.

"Take care there!" came from Major Morris, and just then the Tagal's sword pricked Ben's arm. The young captain leaped back a step, then came forward, and as quick as lightning his sword found the Tagal's ribs. At the same time Dan Casey fired at the enemy, and the officer went down flat on his back, shot through the breast.

"I had to do it," cried the Irish volunteer. "I thought he was afther stickin' ye like a pig!"

"It was a close shave," murmured Ben, as he passed on. "He handled his sword like an expert. I shan't forget you for that, Casey."

"Sure, an' that's all right, captain," answered the soldier, quickly. "Is your arm hurted much?"

"I guess not. Come, we've got them on the run again." And away the pair went, into the cane-brake, through which the rebels were crashing like so many wild cattle.

The day had been full of excitement, but much more was to follow. The cane-brakes were heavy, and soon Ben and Casey found themselves separated from the main body of the battalion and out of sight

of their own company. Then several Filipinos confronted them and called upon them to surrender.

"We ain't surrenderin' just yit, we ain't!" howled the Irish soldier, and let drive at the nearest rebel, while Ben discharged his pistol. Two of the enemy were wounded, and in an instant the others took to their heels, evidently convinced that such fighters were "too many" for them.

The encounter, however, had taken time, and now Ben called upon his companion to stop running. "We want to know where we are running to first," he said. "Listen."

They listened and made out a distant firing to both the right and the left. "I'm afther thinkin' our b'ys is to the right," said Dan Casey.

"I believe you are right, Casey; although both of us may be mistaken," rejoined the young captain of Company D. "We will try that direction, anyway."

They continued on their way through the canebrake until they reached a small stream. Here the ground was soft and full of treacherous bog-holes, and both looked at each other in dismay.

"Sure, an' this is more than we bargained fer, eh,

captain?" remarked Casey, as he pulled himself out of a hole into which he had gone almost to his knees. "If we don't look out we'll git stuck so tight there'll be no budgin' av us."

"The ground to the right seems to be firmer," replied Ben. "Come, we will move in that direction."

But to get out of the soft spot was not easy, and soon they found themselves between the tall cane and up to their knees in a muck that seemed to stick worse than glue.

"Sure, an' this is fightin' wid a vengeance," said the Irish volunteer, smiling grimly. "It's sthuck we are like flies on a fly paper, eh, Captain Russell?"

"We've got to get out somehow, Casey," answered Ben, half desperately. "Our command is marching farther and farther away, and we'll have all we can do to get up to them."

"Sure thin, an' Major Morris betther send a detail back wid a long rope to pull us out. We couldn't fly from the inimy now if we thried, could we?"

"This is no joke, Casey."

"Joke, bedad? No, captain, I'm afther thinkin'

it's a mighty sarious difficulty. But there's no use av cryin', no matther how bad it is," finished the Irish soldier, philosophically.

A moment of reflection convinced Ben that the best thing he could do was to go back part of the distance they had come, and make an endeavor to cross the little stream at another point.

They retreated with difficulty, first one sinking into some treacherous hole and then the other. Once Casey went flat on his back, and gave a loud yell of dismay when he found himself covered with a mud that was more like a paste than anything else.

"Sure, an' I'll not go in such a cane-field again, bedad," he muttered, as he started to pick up the gun he had dropped. As he did so a cracking of cane-stalks near them caused both to straighten up in alarm.

"Who comes?" cried Ben, and drew the pistol he had shoved into his belt.

There was no answer and he repeated the demand. "Are you Americans?" he added.

Still there was no reply. But the cracking of the stalks continued, and the sounds seemed to move around the pair in something of a circle. Then

came a soft command in the Tagalog dialect. At once Dan Casey clutched Ben by the arm.

"They be afther surroundin' us, captain," he whispered. "Be the noises there must be tin or a dozen av thim. Phwat shall we do, fight or run fer it?"

CHAPTER XIV

SURROUNDED BY THE ENEMY

FOR the moment after Dan Casey spoke Ben was silent, not knowing himself what was best to do. That the Filipinos were surrounding them there could be no doubt, since those approaching would have answered the young captain of Company D had they been Americans.

The position of the pair was dangerous in the extreme, for the tall cane-stalks surrounded them upon all sides, giving shelter to the enemy, while the Tagals could see the volunteers with ease.

"Keep quiet, Casey," whispered Ben, as the soldier started to speak again. "They may not know how many there are of us here and sneak off, fearing an ambush."

The Irish volunteer nodded to show that he understood. He was holding his gun before him, ready to shoot whenever it appeared necessary.

Presently there was another whispered command, coming from directly in front of our friends. A

slight movement in the cane-brake followed, and then all became silent once more.

"Come!" whispered Ben. "Don't fire until you see me do so."

Thus speaking, the young captain moved slowly and cautiously from the spot they had occupied for five minutes or more. He picked his steps, and they fell as silently as those of a cat after a bird. Casey was at his heels, almost holding his breath, and his small eyes glistening with expectancy. Both knew that they were carrying their lives in their hands.

Two rods had been covered, and still nothing was seen of the Filipinos. Was it possible that they had withdrawn? But no, there was another cracking of cane-stalks and another command in the Tagalog language, coming now from their left. Then of a sudden a Mauser rang out, and a bullet whistled back of Ben's head and across Casey's face.

The report had not yet died out when Ben fired, straight for the flash of fire of which he had caught a momentary glimpse. That his shot reached its mark was proven by the wild yell of pain which followed.

"The jig is up!" cried Dan Casey. "We must

run fer it, captain!" And as a Tagal came into view before them he fired point-blank at the fellow, hitting him in the breast and killing him on the spot.

As luck would have it, the Filipino whom Casey had killed was a petty officer and the leader of the detachment, and his sudden taking-off disconcerted the insurgents for a minute, who yelled one to another that their leader was shot. Taking advantage of the confusion, our friends rushed headlong through the cane-brake, firing several times as they ran. A dozen shots answered them, but none of these took effect.

"I think the road is yonder," said Ben, pointing with his pistol as they progressed. "Hark!"

From a distance came a scattering volley, proving that the fighting was not yet over. It came from the direction in which they were running. But now those left behind were after them, shooting and shouting with vigor, for they were ten to two, and were determined that the wicked *Americanos* should not escape their clutches.

At last the cane-brake was left behind. Beyond was a small part of a rice-field, and close by a cottage which appeared deserted.

"Sure, captain, an' we'll be shot down like dogs

if we show ourselves in th' open," panted Casey, who was almost out of breath.

"Get behind the house," answered Ben. "It is our one chance," and he started in advance. Again the Filipinos fired on them, and this time a bullet touched the young captain's side, cutting a straight hole through his clothing.

They were yet a hundred feet from the cottage when two American soldiers came rushing forth, guns in hand. The strangers took in the situation at a glance, and let drive with such good aim that two of the enemy fell back wounded. The others paused, not knowing how many Americans might be concealed in the building, and in another minute Ben and Casey were for the time being safe.

"By gum, ef it ain't Captain Russell!" cried one of the soldiers, as he faced Ben. "I'm right glad to be yere to help ye, cap'n," and he smiled broadly.

"Ralph Sorrel!" returned Ben, as he recognized the tall Tennesseean who had once accompanied him on a search for Gilbert when the young Southerner was missing. "What are you doing here?"

"Jeming an' me hev got a wounded man with us — Sergeant Kaser o' our company. We war

takin' him back o' the lines, when he got so bad we brung him in yere to rest a spell. But you — "

"Thim rebels is comin' agin!" announced Dan Casey. "Six, eight, nine av thim, wid wan limpin'. How many av us are there here?" he asked, as he looked around.

"Four," answered Ben. "Load up, boys, and when you shoot — "

"We'll make every shot tell," answered Jeming, a hardy-looking soldier, almost as tall as his companion.

"I don't believe they will come very close," continued Ben. "They know that we have the advantage of them, even if we are but four to nine."

The young captain was right. The Filipinos had showed themselves only for a few seconds. Now, as Sorrel raised his gun, they lost no time in darting behind cover.

The cottage consisted of four rooms, all on the ground floor, and a low loft upstairs. It was well built and fairly furnished in native fashion. On the single bed it contained lay the wounded soldier, Sergeant Kaser, whom Ben had met several times. He was hit in the neck, and looked as if he could last but a few hours at the most.

"Sorry we can't git ye back to camp, sergeant," said Sorrel, as he did what he could to ease the wounded one's pain. "The house is surrounded by the enemy. I reckon we kin keep 'em out, but I reckon likewise thet they kin keep us in — at least fer a while."

"It — don't — matter," gasped Sergeant Kaser. "I am not — not — long for this world. What a terrible thing war is! I never thought I was going to be shot down like this!" And he gave another gasp. His eyes were staring from his head, for he was suffering severe pain.

Ben looked around the cottage for something which might be given to the sufferer to ease him. But the dwelling had been stripped of all small things, and nothing in the way of food, drink, or medicine remained. Sorrel had already bound a handkerchief soaked in cold water around the wounded neck, so nothing more could be done, excepting to raise the sufferer up to a sitting position, at his request. "I don't know as thet is best fer him," whispered the tall Tennesseean to Ben. "But he ain't long fer this world, as he says, an' he might as well hev his wish as not."

In the meantime Casey and Jeming were on

guard, one watching to the front and right, the other to the left and rear. The nearest building to the cottage was a hundred and fifty feet away, but bushes and small trees were numerous, and the Americans were afraid the rebels might try to sneak up behind these and surprise them.

"Something is moving over there," announced Jeming, after watching several of the bushes for a short spell. "Can't make out, though, if it's man or beast."

"Have you plenty of ammunition?" asked Ben, who, as an officer, felt in charge of the party.

"Seventeen rounds, captain."

"And how about you, Casey?"

"Fifteen rounds," returned the Irish volunteer, after counting up the contents of his belt.

"I have twelve rounds, captain," came from Sorrel. "But I reckon you know how I shoot, an' Jeming's jest as good, mebbe better."

"I think the supply is sufficient," said Ben, "so don't run any chances. If you think that is an enemy give him a shot. But don't hit one of our fellows by mistake," he added, by way of caution.

"It's a Tagal!" cried Jeming, while the young

captain was yet beside him. The gun was levelled like a flash, a report followed, and the Filipino fell behind the bushes and was seen no more.

"Thet will teach 'em to keep their distance," was Sorrel's comment. "Perhaps they'll clear out soon, bein' afeered some more o' our troops will come this way."

But the natives were "game," as Ben expressed it; and instead of withdrawing, they began to come closer, using every bush, tree, and outbuilding to the best advantage. Some of their fellows had joined them, so that the attacking party now numbered fifteen, and each well armed. They had seen that Ben wore the uniform of a captain, and felt that the capture of such an officer would be much to their credit.

Sergeant Kaser was now groaning so that he could be heard even outside of the building, and as the rebels had fired through the windows several times, they concluded that they had wounded one of the four men they knew to be inside. If this was so, but three *Americanos* were now left, and they felt that victory would soon be within their grasp.

"Surrendor, or we kill eferyboddy!" cried one

of the number, in English that could scarcely be understood. "We haf dreety mens outside."

"We ain't surrenderin', not by a jugful!" answered Sorrel. "What in thunder does he mean by 'dreety mens'?" he added, to his companions.

"I think he means thirty," answered Ben. "But I don't believe there are that many."

"Yes, but there are more than there was," announced Casey, quickly. "I'm just afther seein' 'em pass yonder bushes." He had pointed his gun, but the Filipinos had been too quick for him.

"Do you surrendor?" demanded the voice again. "We shall begin to shoot if you no gif up."

"No surrender," answered Ben, firmly.

Hardly had he spoken when something came rolling toward the cottage and stopped close to the porch. It was a rude ball made of sugar-cane husks and over a foot in diameter. The ball was ablaze and burning fiercely, as if covered with pitch.

CHAPTER XV

THE ESCAPE FROM THE BURNING HOUSE

"HULLO, that's a new wrinkle!" exclaimed Ben. "They are going to try burning us out."

"Sure, an' thim haythins is up to all sorts av dodges," cried Dan Casey. "It's meself as would like to git a squint at th' feller that threw that."

"I've got him, I reckon," whispered Sorrel, taking a ready aim at a thin hedge to the left of the house. The report of his gun was followed by a shriek of pain, and a Filipino fell into view, the blood flowing freely from a wound in his neck. Soon his companions caught him by the legs and dragged him back into cover.

After this brief exchange of "compliments," as the tall Tennesseean called it, there came a lull. Evidently the natives were disconcerted by the unexpected fall of the man who had thrown the fire-ball and knew not what to do.

"Do you suppose they have quitted the vicin-

ity?" questioned Jeming, after listening vainly for some sound from without. From a distance came a scattering fire, but around the native house was the silence of death, for the man who had been shot by Sorrel had fainted from loss of blood.

"They are up to something, you can be certain of that," answered Ben. "The Filipino is at his worst when he is silent."

"Right ye air, cap'n," put in Sorrel. "Yere she comes agin — an' a scorcher, too!"

From over the bushes came a huge fire-ball, blazing brightly. It struck the thatch of the cottage close to the edge of the roof, and before it fell to the ground had set fire to the abode, which began to burn as though no shower had wet it for a month.

"That settles it!" came from Jeming. "We've got to get out, or we'll be burnt up like rats in a corn-crib."

"But the sergeant —" began Sorrel, when a low moan issued from the corner.

"Never — mind — me, boys," came, with several gasps. "I'm — I'm going! Good — good — bye — to — to — Tell mother —"

He said no more, but fell back exhausted. All

rushed to him, but ere anybody could raise his form again he was gone from this earth forever.

Tears stood in the eyes of Ralph Sorrel, and Jeming was scarcely less affected, for both had known the sergeant intimately. "Another victim," murmured the tall Tennesseean. "How long is this yere blamed war goin' ter last, anyhow?"

"Not much longer, I hope," answered Ben, in a low voice. "I, for one, have seen enough of bloodshed." Then the young captain straightened up, for fear he might break down. "But we must attend to our duty, and get away if we can. See, the flames are eating in at the window."

"All right, cap'n, I'm ready," said Sorrel. "But we must carry this yere body outside fust. We can't let it be burnt up, nohow."

He nodded to Jeming, who understood, and covering the form of the dead man with a blanket, they marched to the door with the stiffening form. The coast seemed clear, and they darted out and deposited their grewsome burden on the grass. They were just returning to the shelter of the doorway when two shots rang out, but neither was effective.

By this time the cottage was burning so fiercely

that to remain inside longer would have proved highly dangerous. Accordingly, Ben called a council of war.

"I think we had best strike out for the grove of trees on the right," he announced. "The distance is shorter than to the other shelters, and the grass is so high that perhaps we can get some benefit by stooping down as we run."

"Right ye air, cap'n," answered Sorrel, and Casey and Jeming nodded.

"Surrendor, you *Americanos!*" came in a shout from without. "Surrendor, you beasts!"

"Let them burn up, they deserve it!" came in Spanish.

"All ready?" asked Ben, and receiving a nod, he hurried to a side window. Below was a small bush, and in a moment he had dropped to the ground. As he started through the long grass, Casey and the others followed him.

A wild yell speedily showed that this new movement had been discovered, and a dozen shots rang out. But the Filipinos were too excited to shoot straight, and the bullets merely clipped their way through the mango and other trees, or buried themselves in the side of the burning building.

At first Ben thought to fire in return. But to find shelter was the prime consideration, and on he went, holding his pistol in readiness, but without pulling the trigger. Here and there a Filipino could be seen flitting from bush to tree, but these glimpses were short and far from satisfactory.

"They are coming!" came from Dan Casey, just as the nearest of the trees was gained. "Back, ye rascals!" he shouted, and fired as quickly as he could. Casey was right; the Tagals were surrounding them, and now they had to fight back to back, in as hot a contest as the young captain had ever seen. They were clearly outnumbered, but retreat was impossible, for the Filipinos surrounded them upon every side.

What happened during the next five minutes is almost impossible to describe, for every movement was executed with lightning-like rapidity, the Filipinos bound to kill or capture the Americans, and at the same time afraid that they would slip like eels through their fingers. After a score of shots taken at a distance, they closed in, and Ben found himself confronted by two fierce-looking men, one armed with a Mauser rifle and the other with a wicked-looking bolo. The Mauser was empty, and

its owner evidently out of ammunition, for as he advanced he used the weapon as a club.

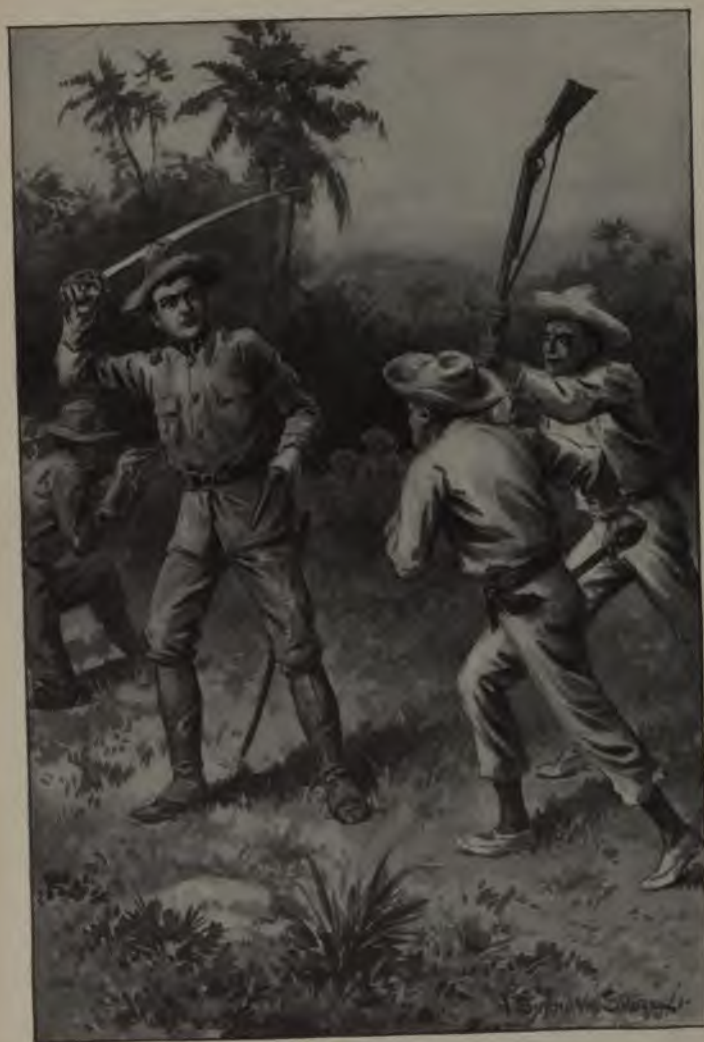
Ben was hard pressed, for his pistol was now empty, and there was no chance to reload it. But his sword kept the two Tagals back, and had it not been for his gun, one of the enemy would have had his head split open from the blade. But now the rascal with the bolo tried to attack the young captain from one side, while he with the gun swung around to the other.

Ben could expect no aid from his companions, for all were as hotly engaged as himself; indeed, Sorrel more so, for he was fighting three men, while Jeming and Dan Casey, side by side, and with their backs against a heavy thorn-bush, were fighting the balance of the detachment.

The young captain felt that he could do little or nothing more, and expected each instant to have his assailants hurl themselves directly upon him, when a shout came from Sorrel which gave all of our friends hope.

"Some soldiers air comin'!" sang out the Tennesseean. "This way, boys, this way, an' be quick about it!"

"What's the matter?" came in a hoarse growl



"His sword kept the two Tagals back." — *Page 147.*

from the roadway, and in a few seconds a whole company of the North Dakota troops burst into view. Their captain, a short, fat man, but one who was an excellent fighter, took in the situation at a glance, and ordered the Filipinos surrounded.

Taken by surprise, the Tagals were dumfounded, and for half a minute knew not what to do. Then they started to run, but this movement came too late, and four went down at the first volley from the newly arrived men. The others, realizing their helplessness, threw down their arms and surrendered.

"Had it hot, eh, captain," said the North Dakota man to Ben as he came up with a quizzical smile on his round face, from which the perspiration was pouring in a stream.

"Yes," panted Ben. "You came up in the nick of time, and I must thank you for—"

"That's all right, captain — no more than you would do for me, and I know it." The North Dakota man shook hands. "It's been a long running fight to-day," he added. "Where is your command?"

"That remains to be found out," answered Ben. "Have you seen any of them during the last two

hours? I and one of my men became separated from them in the cane-brakes."

"I guess you'll find them up near Baliuag. Most of the troops are up there. But I wouldn't try going around by this road, for the rebels are scattered in small bands all over this territory. You'll find the main road all right."

"What will you do with these prisoners?"

"Take them up to the main road and send to the colonel for orders."

"Then I will go with you," said Ben, and spoke to the others about it. Soon the whole party was on the way, Sorrel and Jeming carrying the dead form of Sergeant Kaser between them, with Casey trudging near to give them a lift whenever necessary.

It was now growing dark, and looked as if a thunderstorm was at hand. Seeing this, the detachment pushed forward rapidly, until at last the main road was gained. Here, from one of the drivers of a quartermaster's turnout, they learned that Ben's regiment had gone into temporary camp on the outskirts of the town of Baliuag, which was a mile further on. A number of Americans were missing, having become lost in a manner similar to Ben and Casey.

The young captain now lost no time in marching forward once more, and reached his regiment in less than half an hour. He found his company in charge of Gilmore. Many had given him up for dead, and they were delighted at his reappearance.

"We can't do without you," said the acting first lieutenant. And as he shook hands his honest face showed that he meant what he said.

"And I don't know that I can do without my company," replied Ben. "Anyway, I'm awfully glad to be back. In the future, I must be a little more careful about keeping the boys in sight."

CHAPTER XVI

NEWS FROM HOME

It was evident that the majority of the insurgents had now had enough of fighting, for while the engagement just mentioned was taking place, General Luna of the Filipinos sent forward his chief of staff to General MacArthur, with a request that hostilities cease, pending a conference of Americans and Filipinos looking toward a settlement of existing difficulties.

But our leaders knew only too well what delay meant, and refused to enter into any compact unless the natives first threw down their arms. The Filipinos wanted their freedom, but events had now so shaped themselves that absolute freedom for them appeared to be out of the question. So the conference practically amounted to nothing. And while this was taking place, General Hale began to move eastward to join General Lawton's command on its march toward San Isidro. It was the policy of all the American commanders to

give the Filipinos no rest during the short time left to them before the heaviest of the rainy season set in.

A rest of two days did Ben's company a world of good. Communications with Malolos were now opened, and supplies were coming forward rapidly. With the supply wagons came Carl Stummer, just from the hospital and still somewhat "shaky," but eager to be again on the firing line.

"I could not dink me of stayin' any longer," he said, as he shook hands all around. "Der doctther say, 'You vos besser here,' und I say, 'I ton't gits me no besser bis I schmell dot powder purning vonce more alretty!'"

"Well, it's powdher ye'll be afther shmellin' soon," put in Dan Casey. "It's forward we go to-morrow, so th' colonel is afther sayin'."

"Goot!" said Carl. Then he added with a faint smile. "You see, Tan, I vos afraid you kill all dem Filibenos off pefore I could git here."

"Sure an' I saved a couple fer ye, Carl," replied his chum. "Ye'll not be wantin' fer a scrap, I'll warrant!" And then he related his own and Ben's adventures, to which the German volunteer listened with much interest.

The wagon train had brought in the mail, and this included the usual letters for Ben — one from Walter and the other from Uncle Job Dowling. Ben breathed a long sigh as he opened the communications.

"I'm going to spring a surprise on you," so wrote Walter. "I've been reading the newspapers, and it makes me weary to think that I am just cruising around with our squadron doing nothing, while you and Larry are right in it, head and heels. I've applied for a transfer to one of the warships in Manila waters, and it may be that before this reaches you I will be on the bounding Pacific on my way to join you and Larry in our fight with Aguinaldo and his supporters. Si Doring, my old Yankee chum, has applied with me, so we'll probably come on together, and when we get there you and Larry will have to look to your laurels, that's all."

"Dear Walter!" murmured Ben, after reading the letter twice. "What will he say when he hears that Larry is missing? If Larry doesn't show up, it will break his heart, and it will break

mine, too!" And he brushed away the tears that sprang up in spite of his efforts to keep them down. Then he turned to the heavy, twisted scrawl from his Uncle Job.

"It's rare good news you have sent, Ben," wrote the old man, after stating that he was in good health, "and the news comes none too soon, for the party who took a mortgage on my house wants his money, and where I am going to get it I don't know, with money so tight and interest and bonus so high. I've told him that Braxton Bogg is captured, — and he saw it in the newspaper, too, — and he is about of a mind to wait for his money now until the bank gets back what was stolen, and settles up. For myself, I can't hardly wait till that time comes; and after this you can be sure I'll be mighty careful where I put my cash and what's coming to you three boys, too. You won that thousand dollars' reward fairly, and I hope you and Larry won't squander it like most soldiers would. I thought that war would end soon, but it appears like it would go on forever. Tell Larry to take good care of himself, and mind that you don't get shot."

"Poor Uncle Job—he'll be in a hole again," murmured Ben. "Evidently he wrote this right after I sent word Braxton Bogg was caught, and he doesn't know anything of my being shot and getting over it, and of Benedicto Lupez skipping out with what Bogg stole. Hang the luck, but everything seems to be going wrong." And Ben grated his teeth, in a mood hard to explain.

"What's up, Ben?" The question came from Gilbert, who had just come up to watch the young captain, in considerable surprise.

Ben showed the two communications. "I'm just thinking of what I had best write to my Uncle Job," he returned. "I'm afraid it will break the old fellow's heart to learn that the money is gone—and after he is trying to turn over a new leaf, too."

"And the news about Larry will cause him pain, too, I reckon."

"No doubt, but—but—well, between you and me, Gilbert, I'm afraid the money will hurt the worst—Uncle Job always did set such a store by a few dollars. As for me, I'd give all I'll ever be worth if only I knew Larry was safe," concluded the young captain, arising from a seat under a

palm tree as Major Morris came forward to speak to him.

"Captain, I'm ordered to the front to-night, to do a little reconnoitring," said the major of the first battalion. "I thought perhaps you would like to go out with me. Possibly we can again get on the track of that Bogg fortune;" and he smiled faintly, for he had been with Ben on the night Braxton Bogg had been first made a prisoner.

"I'll go out with you gladly," answered the young captain, promptly. "But I doubt if that money is ever found — or my brother Larry, either," he added, with bitterness.

"Oh, cheer up, captain, you are blue to-night. Come, a little danger will put you on your mettle once more, and you'll forget all about this thing — although I'll allow it's enough to make anybody heart-sick."

Supper was served, and the sun had long since sunk to rest over the vast plain and ocean to the westward, when Ben and Major Morris set out, taking with them an ample supply of ammunition and likewise a day's rations, for they were to move directly into the heart of the enemy's coun-

try and might be absent for a day or longer. The object of their going was to find out if a certain Lieutenant Caspard, who had deserted the American ranks, was with the rebels now gathering at Maasin, and if so, whether or not he was acting as an officer of the Filipino forces. If they could catch the deserter and bring him back, they were to be well rewarded. Strange to say, the orders were not to shoot him if it could be avoided.

"It's a strange mission," said Major Morris, as they set out. "But such are Colonel Darcy's orders, and he is backed up in them by the general. Between you and me, I think this Caspard has been playing a double game between our forces and those of the Filipinos, and those at headquarters want to find out just what it means. One man told me that this Caspard was out of his head, and had an idea that he could stop the war by telling the rebels we would grant them everything they want if only they would throw down their arms."

"Would the rebels swallow such a yarn?"

"Some of the more ignorant might. But that isn't the point; Caspard may have given them some military information of vast importance.

You must remember we are in a territory that may be full of pitfalls for us," concluded the major.

Ben thought but little of the ending of this speech at the time, but had good cause to remember it before midnight. On they pushed past the picket guard and on to a side road which it was said would bring them around to the north side of Maasin. Both were in fairly good humor by this time, and the major told many an anecdote of army life which made Ben laugh outright. The major saw that his companion was indeed "blue," and was bound to dispel the blues if it could be done.

"And that story puts me in mind of one on General Grant," he continued presently. "Grant was sitting in his tent one night when — "

"Hush!" interrupted Ben, and caught his companion by the shoulder. Then he pointed into the semi-darkness ahead. "Are those rebels, or friends?"

The road they were pursuing was, for the most part, a winding one. But they had now gained a straight stretch, the farther end of which was somewhat in the open. Looking in that direction

Ben had discerned six or seven figures stealing silently along, guns on shoulders and packs on their backs.

Major Morris came to a halt and surveyed the figures attentively. "I don't believe they are our men," he whispered. "None of the troops came as far as this — so the general stated."

"Then, if they are rebels, what have they been doing?" went on Ben. "See, they have picks and shovels and axes."

"Perhaps it's an engineering corps," and the major laughed softly at what he considered his little joke. "These Tagals are bound to be up-to-date, you know."

"Well, if they are an engineering corps, what have they been doing?" demanded the young captain, who felt by no means satisfied at his companion's words.

"I'll give it up — no, I won't, I'll go forward and investigate," came from the major. "There they go, around the turn, and walking just as fast as they can. If we want to catch up to them, we will have to hurry."

"We don't want to get too close, major. They are not the game we are after, remember."

"True, captain, but it won't do any harm to find out what we can of them. We may be doing General Lawton a great service by such an action."

The night was cloudy, and as they pushed forward to the bend in the road it became darker than ever, until they could see hardly anything of what was ahead of them. The way was evidently little used, for the grass grew thickly even in the centre of the highway.

The pair were going on, side by side, and with eyes strained to catch sight of those who had gone before, when suddenly Major Morris felt the ground giving way beneath him. "My gracious!" he ejaculated, and caught Ben by the arm. At the same instant the young captain uttered a cry, and also felt himself going down. Then came the snapping of slender bamboo poles, and the scattering of some loose grass, and down into darkness and space shot the pair, swallowed up utterly by a hole which had unexpectedly opened to receive them.

CHAPTER XVII

IN AND OUT OF A STRANGE PITFALL

MAJOR MORRIS and Ben had fallen into a pit dug by the Filipinos for the purpose of catching their enemies. It was an old trick, and one which had been used quite extensively at the opening of the rebellion, but which was now falling into disuse, for the reason that few Americans were ever caught by the device.

The method was to dig a square hole in the centre of some trail or road which the Americans would probably use in their advance. At the bottom of this hole would be planted upright a number of sharp bamboo sticks, and then the top would be covered over with slender bamboo sticks and loose grass or palm leaves. If one or more persons stepped upon the top sticks, they would break at once, and the unfortunates would fall upon the sharp points below, which were certain to inflict more or less serious injury.

Fortunately, however, for the young captain and

his companion, the hole into which they had tumbled was not provided with the sharp sticks mentioned. The natives had just finished the opening when an officer had called upon them to leave the vicinity as it was getting dangerous, owing to the rapid advances made by the Americans. So the trap had been set with its most dangerous element lacking.

Yet the fall was by no means a pleasant one, and for a brief instant the young captain of Company D thought that the bottom had dropped out of everything, and that he would surely be killed. He tried to catch hold of something, but all he could reach was the major's shoulder, and then both landed with a thud on the soft dirt left at the bottom of the hole.

Ben was the first on his feet, which was not saying much, since the bottom of the opening was not level, and he stood in the soft loam up to his ankles. Shaking himself to find that no bones were broken, he drew a long breath.

"Major, are you all right?" he asked.

"No — no — I'm not all — all right," came with a gasp. "I've had my wi — wind knocked ou — out of me."

"Any bones broken?"

"I gue—guess not. But wh—who ever heard of such a con—founded trick?"

"I've heard of it several times, major. But we are not as bad off as we might have been had the rebels put some sharp sticks down here to spit us with."

"True." Major Morris gave a grunt, and wiped the dirt from his eyes. "Well, I reckon we've learned what their engineering corps was up to."

This was said so dryly that in spite of his discomfiture Ben was compelled to laugh.

"Yes, we've learned. The question is, now we are down here, how are we going to get out?"

"Better make a light and see how deep the hole is first," replied the commander of the first battalion.

Fortunately Ben had plenty of matches with him, and striking one, he lit a bamboo stalk and held it up as a torch. By the flickering light thus afforded they saw that the hole was about eight feet wide and twice as long. The level of the road above was fully eight feet over their heads.

"Looks as if we were in a box, eh, captain?" said the major, grimly.

"We're certainly in a hole," responded Ben.

"But I think we can get out without much trouble. I wish we had a spade."

"Well, wishing won't bring one, and there is nothing here to take the place of one, either."

"Nothing but our hands. Here, if you'll hold the light, I'll see what I can do."

"Here is a bit of a flat stick, try that," rejoined Major Morris; and taking the article mentioned, Ben set to work with vigor, attacking one end of the hole by loosening the dirt so that a large portion of it soon fell at their feet. Standing upon the fallen portion he continued his operations, and presently more of the dirt fell, leaving an incline up which both began to scramble on hands and knees. It was not a very dignified thing to do, but it was far better than to remain in the hole, and besides, there was nobody at hand to comment on the want of dignity in the movement.

"We are well out of that," began Major Morris, brushing off his clothing as he spoke. "In the future —"

"Hold on, major, somebody is coming," interrupted Ben, and pulled his companion back. He had seen a faint light advancing toward them, from a side road which joined the main road at a point but a few

yards distant. Soon he made out a heavy cart approaching, drawn by a pair of caribaos, or water buffaloes. On the seat of the cart sat two sleepy-looking natives.

"We must stop that cart," was the major's comment. "If we don't, there will be a bad smash-up."

"I don't think it's a good plan to expose ourselves," replied Ben.

"But do you want those chaps to break their necks?" demanded the commander of the first battalion. "More than likely they are *amigos*."

"I've got a plan for warning them, major."

As Ben spoke he picked up some of the driest of the grass and palm leaves and applied a match to the stuff. It blazed up readily, and he threw the mass in with the other stuff about the edge of the hole.

"There, if they can't see that they must be blind," he said. "Come, let us get out," and off they ran for the thicket close at hand. From here they watched the cart and saw it come to a halt near the hole and knew that the turnout was safe.

"I shouldn't think the rebels would care to leave those holes about," was Major Morris' comment, as they pushed on once more. "They are as dangerous to their own people as they are to us."

"I suppose they tell their own people about them."

"Those men on the buffalo cart evidently knew nothing."

"The rebels don't care for the *amigos*. Their idea is, if a native is not with them, he is against them, and must suffer with the Americans."

To play the part of spies in such a country as this was not easy, for the Americans were easily distinguished from the natives. Had Ben and the major spoken Spanish fluently, they might have passed for Spaniards, as each was tanned from constant exposure to the strong sun. But this could not be, and so they had to go ahead and trust to luck to see them through with their dangerous errand.

At length they felt that they must be close to the enemy's picket line, and paused to consider the situation. Before them was a gentle slope, terminating at a small but deep stream which flowed into the Rio Grande River.

"I think some of the rebels are over there," said the major, pointing to a hill, from the top of which could be seen a faint glow. "There is certainly a camp-fire back there."

"There is a house just below us," returned Ben. "Or is it a mill?"

"A mill most likely. They wouldn't build an ordinary dwelling right at the water's edge."

"Perhaps the rebels are using the mill as a sort of headquarters. What do you say if we investigate?"

The major agreed, and they began to pick their way along the stream. Soon they reached a rude bridge, and were on the point of crossing, when a sharp cry rang out from the building they were approaching.

"Hullo, that's a woman's voice!" exclaimed Ben. "Somebody is in trouble."

"Help! thief! murderer!" came in Spanish. "Oh, help, for the love of kind Heaven, help!"

"It's a woman, true enough!" ejaculated the major. "I wonder what the trouble is?"

"I'm going to find out," answered Ben. The cry for aid appealed to his heart, and he bounded toward the mill-house, for such the building proved to be, without further hesitation. Nor was Major Morris far behind him.

As they came closer they saw that the structure was dark, saving for a faint light that came from one

of the rooms built over the mill stream. It was in this room, evidently, that some sort of struggle was going on, for now both heard the cry for help repeated, followed by the overturning of a table. Then came the voices of two men, and the cry came to a sudden end.

"Two men are misusing some woman," cried Ben, "come on!" and rushing around to the front of the building, he found the rickety stairs leading to the house floor, and bounded upward. The door at the top stood ajar and he pushed it in, with Major Morris at his heels. The room at hand was dark, the struggle was going on in the apartment next to it.

Ben paused long enough to see that his pistol had not sustained any injury in the tumble into the hole, and was ready for use, and then threw open the door before him.

The light in the room was not very bright, but coming out of the darkness Ben could see but little, for a few seconds. The room was thick with the smoke of cigarettes, and through the haze the young captain made out two men standing beside an overturned table, one with a knife in his hand. To his intense surprise the men were Americans and dressed in the uniforms of regulars.

"What does this mean?" he demanded. "What are you —"

And then Ben got no further, for a swift look around the room told him that the two men were alone — that the woman he had heard crying for help was not there.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE ADVENTURE AT THE MILL-HOUSE

FOR the moment it must be confessed that Ben was absolutely dumfounded, and Major Morris also. They had fully expected to see a woman in the hands of the regulars before them, and they could scarcely believe the evidence of their own senses.

But if the officers were astonished, the men they confronted were likewise taken back, and stared in amazement, which quickly gave way to consternation.

"What do you want?" demanded one, as soon as he could speak. And then he glanced over their shoulders to see if the newcomers were alone.

"We thought we heard a woman in trouble," answered Ben, slowly.

"And we did hear a woman," put in the major. "Where is she?"

The two regulars exchanged unsteady glances, for each was somewhat the worse for liquor. "There ain't no woman here," answered one of them, sullenly.

"Then who was crying for help?" persisted the young captain.

"See here, cap'n, you are on the wrong trail," came from the older of the regulars. "Me and Bill's jest been having a little rumpus between ourselves. We meant no harm by it."

"I don't believe you," came from Major Morris, promptly. "There is some mystery here, and as sure as you're born I'm going to find out what it is!" he went on.

The major had scarcely finished when Ben's eyes fell to the floor, and he saw the outline of a trap-door under one of the regular's feet. One edge of the door was raised about half an inch above the floor proper, as if the door had been opened and not put back evenly into place.

"Major, look at that trap-door!" he cried. "I'll wager they used it while we were coming up the outside stairs."

"You must be right, captain. If you'll —"

"We didn't use no trap-door," shouted the younger of the regulars, but he appeared much disconcerted over the discovery Ben had made.

"Captain, I have them covered," came from Major Morris, as he brought out the two pistols with which

he had wisely provided himself. "Perhaps you had better investigate."

"I will," returned the young captain, and backed out of the room. The regulars wanted to stop him, but aiming his weapons at them the major told them to hold their peace.

"If everything is all right, you won't be harmed," he said. "But it doesn't look right to me. You have no business here, for one thing."

"And what business have you here?" demanded the older regular. And then he changed his manner. "We were captured in the fight of last week, and were just trying to get back to our lines again."

"We'll talk about that when my friend the captain gets back, my man. If we are treating you unjustly, I'll apologize and do the handsome thing by you," he added.

In the meantime Ben was making his way down to the bank of the stream, under the mill, with all possible speed. It was extremely dark, and he had to pick his way with caution for fear of tumbling into some ugly hollow. Below the mill was a fall of water, and here the stream ran between a series of sharp rocks.

Ben had just gained the bank of the stream when

a low moan reached his ears. At first he could not locate the sound, but presently discovered that it came from the vicinity of the rocks. Feeling his way along he managed, but not without great difficulty, to gain the top of the rocks. Here he saw the water foaming and boiling twenty feet below.

"That woman must be down there," he muttered. Then he raised his voice. "Where are you?"

"Down here, by the rocks!" came back faintly. "Help! please help me!"

Locating the voice as well as he was able, the young captain began crawling down from one rock to another. This was difficult work, and he had to move with extreme care for fear of a tumble, which would land him directly into the boiling stream. At last, however, he found himself perched on a bit of a shelf, with the water less than two feet away.

From this point of view he beheld the sufferer, who was swinging in the water, with her arms tightly clutching a sharp stone which reared its point just above the surface of the stream. He saw that she was evidently a Spanish woman, well along in years, and that her dress was sadly torn,

"Can you hold on a few minutes longer?"—*Page 173.*

and her long hair was floating loosely over her neck and face.

It must be confessed that the young captain was perplexed over the situation that confronted him. The sufferer was just beyond his reach, and he felt that to plunge into the water after her would be to take a big risk, for if the stream at this point was over his waist, the force of the current would carry him off in an instant.

"Can you hold on a few minutes longer?" he called out.

"No! no! I am too weak," came more faintly than ever. "Help me quickly, and Heaven will reward you!"

"I will do what I can — but you must hold tight for a minute," answered Ben.

Just above his head a number of bushes were growing, and among these he had espied a long, stout-looking shoot. Clambering to this, he pulled out his pocket-knife and cut it off. Then he leaped down once more, and holding tight to the rocks with one hand, shoved out the branch with the other. "Catch hold, if you can," he cried.

The woman understood and gave up the rock for

the stick, and Ben pulled her toward him. It was no easy task, and once it looked as if she would lose her hold and be swept away. But in a minute the danger was past, and the young captain was hauling her up to where he stood. She was thoroughly exhausted, and no sooner did he have her in his arms than she fainted.

One difficulty had been overcome, but another still remained, and that was to get up to the safe ground above the rocks. But once again the bushes growing out of the crevices came into play, and, hauling himself from one to another, Ben at last found himself safe, with his burden resting heavily over his shoulder.

It was now that the young captain found the woman was suffering from a blow over the left temple, from which the blood was slowly trickling. Laying the form down, he brought out his handkerchief and bound up the wound as well as he was able. This had just been accomplished when the sufferer came again to her senses and stared around her in bewilderment.

"You — you — am I safe?" she asked, in broken English, but in a sweet voice which went straight to Ben's heart.

"Yes, madam, you are safe," he answered. "Did those two men throw you into the stream?"

"Yes, yes! Oh, they are villains, señor — great villains."

"I must say they look it, even if they are of our troops," replied the young captain. "Come, do you think you can walk back to the mill with me?"

The woman said she would try, and he assisted her to her feet. She was still very weak, and readily consented to lean on his arm; and thus they moved slowly back the way the captain of Company D had come.

During all this time Ben had not heard a sound from the house, and he was anxious to know how Major Morris was faring, although feeling positive that the major was fully capable of taking care of himself. Now, as they came closer, he heard loud talking.

"We ain't goin' to stay, major, — an' it ain't right fer you to ask us to," the older of the regulars was saying.

"You will stay, and that's the end of it," came in the major's clean-cut tones. "If you attempt to pass through that doorway, I'll put a bullet through you."

"But we are friends, major, and —"

"I don't know that I am a friend to you. It depends upon what my companion the captain will have to report when he gets back."

"He won't have nuthin' to report, so far as we are concerned," put in the younger regular. "We ain't done any wrong, 'ceptin' to quarrel a bit between us. Everybody has a set-to once in a while, you know."

By this time Ben was tramping up the outside stairs, supporting the woman as before. Now he pushed his way into the outer room of the mill-house, the woman following with some hesitancy. At the appearance of their late victim the regulars fell back as though struck a blow.

"Nice sort of chaps you are," exclaimed Ben, hotly. "You don't deserve to wear Uncle Sam's uniform. A set of prison stripes would suit both of you much better."

"Hullo, you've found the lady," cried the major. "Sit down, madam, and tell us what this means."

A bench was handy, and the sufferer dropped heavily upon it. The regulars looked as if they wished themselves anywhere but in their present situation, yet they did not dare to budge, for Major

Morris still held "the drop" upon them, and the commander of the first battalion looked as if he would stand no nonsense.

"These men came here to rob me," said the woman, slowly. "They are of your kind, but they are not honest."

"Then they are not of our kind," answered Ben, promptly. "We do not allow our soldiers to rob anybody."

"We didn't come to steal—" began the older regular, when Major Morris stopped him.

"Silence!" Not another word until the lady has finished her story."

There was a second of painful silence, and the lady continued: "I am staying at the mill alone, for my husband has gone to the Laguna de Bay on business. Several hours ago, these two soldiers came in and demanded that I serve them with a hot supper. Not wishing to have trouble I gave them the best I had. But they were not satisfied, and broke into my husband's wine closet and drank two bottles of his choicest wine, and smoked his best cigarettes, package after package. Then, after drinking much wine, they demanded that I give them money, and that man," pointing to the older

prisoner, "told his companion that I must have money hidden somewhere, as all the Spanish mill-owners in Luzon were rich, while the truth is, we are very poor, as the war has taken away everything. Then the men drank more, and at last they caught hold of me and threatened me with great violence if I did not give up what I had hidden away. I gave them the little silver I had, but they were not satisfied, and when I tried to run away, one hit me over the head with this bench. Then they plotted to get me out of the way entirely and go on a hunt for money themselves. I cried louder than ever, and then you started to come in. One of the men had opened that trap leading to the river, and as you came up the outer stairs both dropped me down, no doubt to drown me. I was swept down to the rocks at the falls, and there the *capitan* saved me, God bless him for it."

CHAPTER XIX

NEWS OF LARRY

FOR a minute after the Spanish woman finished, nobody in the mill-house spoke. Her tale had impressed both Ben and the major deeply, and they looked with cold contempt at the two regulars who had so disgraced the uniform they wore.

"This is a fine doings, truly," said Major Morris, at length. "I wonder what your commander will say when he hears of it."

"If you please, they have deserted the American army," put in the woman. "They said as much while they were drinking my husband's wine."

"It ain't so!" burst out the older regular, fiercely. "And that woman has told you a string of—"

"Shut up!" interrupted the major, sternly. "I will take this lady's word against yours every time—after what I have witnessed of both of you. Your name, please?"

"I ain't telling my name jest now," was the sullen response.

"Aren't you?" Up came the major's pistol again. "Your name, I said."

"Jack Rodgrew."

"And what is yours?" went on the commander of the first battalion, turning to the younger regular.

The man hesitated for a second. "My name is Jerry Crossing."

"Indeed! How is it your mate called you Bill awhile ago?"

"Why — er — er — "

"I don't believe either of the names is correct," went on the major.

"He is called Bill, and the other is Yadder," put in the Spanish woman. "I heard the names many times."

"Then that will answer, since I also have your company and regiment. Now, then, throw down your cartridge belts."

"Throw 'em down?" howled the regular called Bill.

"That is what I said. Throw them down at once."

"But see here, major — "

"I won't stop to argue with you. Throw the belts down, or take the consequences."

"And what will the consequences be?" questioned Yadder.

"The consequences will be that I will form myself into a court-martial, find you guilty of desertion, and shoot you down where you stand. Come, do those belts go down or not?"

"I reckon they go down," grumbled Yadder; and unloosening the article, he allowed it to slip to the floor, seeing which, his companion followed suit.

"Now both of you hold your hands over your heads, while Captain Russell searches you for concealed weapons."

"We ain't got no concealed weapons."

"I didn't ask you to talk, I told you to hold up your hands."

With exceeding bad grace the two deserters, for such they really proved to be, held up their arms. Approaching them, Ben went through one pocket after another and felt in their bosoms. Each had a long native knife, such as are usually used in the rice-fields.

"I suppose you do not call those concealed weap-

ons," was Major Morris's comment, as Ben came over to him with the knives and the cartridge belts. The rascals' guns stood back of the door behind the commander of the first battalion.

"It ain't fair to take everything away from us," began Yadder, when two shots, fired in rapid succession, cut him short. The shots came from up the stream and not over fifty yards from the mill-house. Soon followed a shouting of voices, and all in the place knew that a band of rebels were approaching.

"They are after somebody!" exclaimed Ben. "They are coming —"

The young captain got no further, for just then there sounded a clatter on the outer steps, and a second later an American soldier burst into the mill-house. He was in tatters, and his left arm hung limply by his side, for he had been shot in the shoulder.

"Americans!" he gasped, as he cast a hurried glance about. "Thank God for that! The rebels are after me, half a dozen strong."

"He went up into the house!" came from without, in the Tagalog dialect.

"After him, men, the *Americano* must not escape us!"

And then footsteps were heard around the house and on the stairs. Ben and the major looked at each other questioningly. What was to be done?

"The trap," whispered the young captain. "If they come up here, we can escape through that."

There was no time to say more, for already the rebels were coming up the stairs, shouting loudly for the escaped *Americano* to give himself up. They advanced in a body, evidently not caring to separate in the darkness, and thinking to find the man alone.

With quick wit Ben ran and placed the table against the door, and on this piled the bench.

"Now the trap, and be quick!" he whispered, and Major Morris understood. Flinging open the door in the floor he looked down, to behold the stream flowing beneath.

"Follow me — it's the best way out," he said to the escaped prisoner. Then he dropped down, holding his pistols over his head, that they might not get wet.

The wounded man was in a desperate humor and lost no time in following. By this time the rebels were hammering lustily on the door which Ben was holding shut.

"What are we to do?" demanded the older of the deserters. "Are you —"

"You can take care of yourselves," answered the young captain, and rushing over to the trap-door he let himself through, closing the trap after him. Then came a plunge into the water, but the stream here was less than four feet deep, and he followed Major Morris and the wounded man to the bank without difficulty. A loud shouting came from overhead, followed by a storm of words from both rebels and deserters, and also from the Spanish woman. Fortunately for the woman, among the rebels was a nephew, who at once came to her aid, and had the two deserters from the American army made prisoners.

"We had better put a little distance between ourselves and that mill," suggested Major Morris, as all three shook the water from their lower garments.

"How is it? are you badly wounded?" asked Ben, turning to their newly made companion.

"Oh, I can go ahead," said the soldier. "It's rather painful, though."

"We'll take care of it for you at the first chance we get," added Ben; and then the three set off at

a brisk pace along the stream and over the rocks to a grove in which they felt they would be comparatively safe until daylight, if no longer.

As the mill-house was left behind, all became quiet, and in the grove nothing disturbed them but the hum of the insects and the occasional cry of some night bird.

Lighting a match, Ben examined the man's wound and bound it up with the major's handkerchief, his own having been left behind with the Spanish woman. The stranger said that his name was Barton Brownell.

"I have been a prisoner of the insurgents for some time," he said, when asked to tell his story. "I was captured just before our troops took Malolos. They had six prisoners all told, and they took us to a place called Guinalo, which is probably forty miles from here, and up in the mountains."

"While you were a prisoner did you see or hear anything of a Lieutenant Caspard?" asked Major Morris, quickly.

"To be sure I did!" burst out Barton Brownell. "He came to see me several times. He has joined hands with the insurgents, and he wanted me to join them, too. But I told him I would

rot first," added the wounded man, and his firmness showed that he meant what he said.

"And was Caspard in the field with the rebels?"

"Yes. He was hand in glove with General Luna and the other rebel leaders, and I think he had turned over some messages from General Otis's headquarters to the rebels. But, candidly speaking, I think Lieutenant Caspard is somewhat off in his head. Once he came to me and said that if only I and the other prisoners would join him, we could end this shedding of blood inside of a week."

"He must be crazy, to join the rebels," put in Ben. "Does he hold any position under them?"

"They call him *capitan*, but if he has such a position, it is merely a nominal one. I think the natives are beginning to suspect that he is not quite right in his mind. But still they love to hear him praise them, and they swallow a good bit of what he says, like so many children."

For the moment Major Morris was silent. Then he turned to Ben. "Our mission seems to have come to a sudden end," he said. "Brownell can tell Colonel Darcy all he wants to know." And he related to the escaped prisoner the reason for their coming beyond the American lines.

"Yes, I reckon I can tell the colonel well enough," answered Barton Brownell. "For I saw Caspard often, as I mentioned before, and he never knew what it was to keep his tongue from wagging."

"And how did you escape?" asked Ben, with interest.

"In a very funny way," and the soldier laughed. "As I said before, we were kept up in the mountains, in a large cave. There were six of our troop, but all told the prisoners numbered twenty-eight. There was a guard of four rebels to keep us from escaping, and an old woman called Mother Beautiful, because she was so ugly, used to cook our food for us — and the food was mighty scanty, I can tell you that.

"Well, one day two of the guards went off, leaving the old woman and the other two guards in sole charge. There had been a raid of some kind the day before, and the guards had some fiery liquor which made them about half drunk. The old woman got mad over this, and she was more angry than ever when one of the guards refused to get her a pail of water from a neighboring spring. 'I'll get the water, mother,' says I, bowing low to her, and would you believe it,

she made the two guards let me out, just to get her the water."

"And the water hasn't arrived yet," said Major Morris, laughing.

"No, the water hasn't arrived yet," answered Barton Brownell. "As soon as I reached the spring I dropped the pail and ran for all I was worth, and hid in the brush along the mountain side. I stayed there two days and nearly starved to death. Then they hunted me out, and I received this wound. But I escaped them and made my way through the jungle and over the rice-fields to here, and here I am."

"You say there were twenty-eight prisoners all told," cried Ben. "Did you ever hear anything of my brother, Larry Russell?"

"Larry Russell?" repeated Barton Brownell, thoughtfully. "To be sure I did. He is a sailor from the *Olympia*, isn't he?"

"Yes! yes! And was he with you?"

"He was, at first. But he wasn't when I left. They moved some of the prisoners away, and he was among them. So he was your brother? That beats all, doesn't it — to think I should fall in with you in such a place as this!"

CHAPTER XX

THE ADVANCE UPON MAASIN

BEN was much surprised and also delighted to learn that Barton Brownell had met Larry, and he lost no time in questioning the escaped soldier regarding his missing brother.

"Yes, your brother was with me about two weeks," said Barton Brownell. "He came up with a detachment of rebels from the Laguna de Bay, after General Lawton left that territory."

"And was he well, or had he been wounded?"

"He was suffering from a cut in the head. A Spaniard had kicked him — and, yes, he told me it was a Spaniard that you and he were after for having robbed a bank of some money."

"Benedicto Lupez!" ejaculated Ben, more astonished than ever.

"That's the name. Your brother had run across that man and his brother at Santa Cruz, and he was trying to make this Benedicto Lupez a prisoner,

when the brother kicked him in the head, and then both of them ran away, and when your brother realized what was going on again he found himself a prisoner. He was taken to a camp near the north shore of the Laguna de Bay, and afterward transferred to the cave where I was held."

"I am thankful that he is alive," murmured the young captain, and breathed silent thanks to God for His mercy. "Do you know where they took Larry to?"

"I can't say exactly, but I know that a great many of the rebels are retreating to the mountains back of San Isidro. I wouldn't be surprised to hear of Aguinaldo making his final stand there."

"I would give all I am worth to gain my brother his liberty."

"And I reckon he would give all he is worth to escape," rejoined Brownell. "The boys hate to be kept prisoners, and try all sorts of devices to get away. One fellow had some gold hidden on his person and tried to bribe a guard with it. But the guard only laughed at him and stole the money."

"Of course you do not know what became of Benedicto Lupez and his brother."

"No, your brother knew nothing further than that

they ran off after the assault on him," concluded Brownell.

The talking had somewhat exhausted the wounded man and Ben forbore to question him further just then. While Barton Brownell rested easily on some moss, the young captain turned to the commander of the first battalion.

"What shall we do next, major?"

"I think we had better be getting back," was the ready answer. "The sooner we report to the colonel the better he will be pleased."

"I feel like pushing right through to San Isidro, on a hunt for my brother."

"It would be a foolish movement, captain, for, unless I am greatly mistaken, the insurgents have a large force in front of us, and to attempt breaking through would be taking a big risk. Be thankful that your brother is safe thus far. As long as he remains quiet I don't think the rebels will harm him."

Ben could not but believe that this was good advice, and he agreed to do as the major thought best. It was now three o'clock in the morning, and half an hour later they started, thinking to rejoin their command before daylight.

It was an exhausting tramp, the more so because Brownell had to be assisted by one or the other for the entire distance.

"I'm a great drag," sighed the wounded soldier. "Perhaps you had better push on and let me shift for myself." But the major and the captain would not hear of this.

They had one little brush with two of the Filipino pickets before getting into the American lines, but the rebels were young men and not very courageous and let them slip by without great trouble.

It was Major Morris who made the report to the colonel, taking Ben and Brownell with him. Colonel Darcy was greatly interested.

"It is, then, as I supposed," he said. "This information will be of great value to us, Major Morris," and he thanked the major and Ben for what they had done. Brownell's report was also received with close consideration by General Lawton himself.

"If the prisoners have been taken to San Isidro, we must try our best to liberate them," said the general. "I am so glad to learn, though, that the rebels are not ill-treating them, as I had supposed."

It was Ben, assisted by Casey, who saw Brownell to the hospital and had the wounded soldier given

every attention. When they parted, Brownell, although now so exhausted that he could scarcely speak, shook the young captain's hand warmly.

"I hope you find your brother soon," he said. "I can imagine how bad it makes you feel to know that he is a prisoner."

The advance of General Lawton's command was now directed at Maasin, a few miles beyond Baliuag. It was led by Colonel Summers, who took with him some Oregon, Dakota, and Third Infantry troops and a battery of the Utah Light Artillery, with other troops following, including Ben's battalion with Major Morris at its head. As before, the advance was along the main road and through the rice-fields, cane-brakes, and the jungle, with the air so oppressive that it felt as though coming out of a steaming oven.

"I dink me I vos right in it from der start, alretty!" exclaimed Carl Stummer, as he plodded along. "Dis vos vorse as der march on Malolos, eh, Tan?"

"Sure, an' it's no picnic," replied the Irish volunteer. "But thin, Carl, me b'y, ye must remimber, we didn't come out here fer fun. We kem out fer to show thim haythins how to behave thimselves an'

grow up into useful an' ornamental citizens av the greatest republic that iver brathed th' breath av life."

"Chust so," returned the German volunteer. "But it vos uphill vork, ennahow," and he sighed deeply. Carl could fight as well as any old-time trooper, but the long tramps through the jungle always disgusted him.

There was the river to cross upon which the mill-house was located, and Ben could not help but wonder if the Spanish woman was still at the structure, and how the American deserters had fared. But the mill-house was too far away to visit, and now the battalion was ordered into action on the upper side of the stream.

"Gangway for General Lawton!" was the cry that reached Ben's ears a few minutes later, and then came a crashing of horses' hoofs, and the tall general rode through their open ranks, followed by several members of his staff. As was usual, the general was bound for the firing line, to personally direct the movements of the men under him. Many were the times that the members of his staff urged him not to make a target of himself. He would not listen; and in the end

this daring exposure cost the gallant leader his life.

But now all was excitement, for a large force of rebels had been uncovered and there was no telling but what the jungle ahead concealed even more. "We are up against it, fellows!" shouted one of the sergeants. "Let us rush 'em for keeps!" And on swept the battalion, until the steady pop-pop of Mausers and the crack of the Springfields could be heard upon every side.

Ben's company was no longer as large as it had been, for death and disease had sadly depleted the ranks. Yet the forty-six men in the command were now thoroughly seasoned fighters, and all loved their young and dashing leader and would have followed him anywhere.

Presently an orderly dashed up to Major Morris.

"Major, Colonel Darcy wishes you to take your command up yonder hill. The rebels have a battery up there, as you can see. If you can rush the position, he will send another battalion to your support."

"Tell Colonel Darcy I will obey the order," answered Major Morris. Then he turned to the four companies. "Boys, we are ordered to take

yonder hill and the two field-pieces perched on top of it. Come on, and I will lead you!"

He waved his sword and away went the first battalion on the double quick, two companies to the front. There was first a slight hollow to cross, and then came a thicket of brambles where many a uniform was reduced to rags. The battery at the top of the hill saw them coming and directed a heavy fire at their advance.

"Hot work!" cried the major, as he ranged up alongside of Ben. "I am afraid the carrying out of this order will cost us dear."

"If you'll allow me to make a suggestion, major —" began Ben.

"Make a dozen, captain."

"Why not take a course to the left then."

"For what reason?"

"There is a big rock on that side, on the very top of the hill."

"But we can't climb that rock."

"No, and neither can the rebels fire over it with their field-pieces. When we get up to the rock we can march around it."

"Well spoken, Russell — you're a born strategist," cried the major, who was too generous to

have any ill feeling because somebody offered him a suggestion. "We'll go that way." And he immediately gave necessary orders.

But the advance was by no means easy, and soon the battalion found itself under such a galling fire that the men were glad enough to seek the shelter of every rock and bush which came handy. The battery could not do everything, and afraid of having his pieces taken from him, the captain had called upon several companies of the Filipinos to assist him in maintaining his position.

"Down!" suddenly shouted Gilbert Pennington, and down went the men, and the next instant a shell burst directly over their heads.

"This is hot and no mistake," murmured Ben. Then he turned to his command. "Forward, men, the sooner we take that position the better it will be for us." And up the hill he dashed, with Casey, Stummer, and the rest following as best they could, for the way was steep and uncertain. At last the very edge of the big rock was gained, and Company D poured around its left side, to find themselves suddenly confronted by a body of Tagalos fully a hundred strong. In the meantime the other companies under Major Morris were com-

ing up on the opposite side of the rock. Ben was on the point of shouting some additional words of encouragement to his men, when he found himself face to face with a mighty Igorrote warrior, who with his long lance seemed determined to pierce the young captain through and through.

CHAPTER XXI

CAMPING OVER A POWDER MAGAZINE

BANG!

It was the report of Ben's pistol, and the weapon was aimed directly for the Igorrote's head, for the young captain had learned the value of aiming and firing quickly.

But the Filipino "had been there before," and as the trigger went down he dropped to the ground with the rapidity of lightning, and the bullet intended for him struck a man some distance in the rear. Then up leaped the Igorrote once more and bounded onward, the lance point aimed directly for Ben's throat!

The young captain's pistol was now empty, the other shots having been discharged during the climb up the hill. His sword was out, but the lance was three times the length of the blade, so he was still at a disadvantage. Yet he aimed a blow at the barbed point and thus turned it aside.

"Ha!" hissed the Filipino, and drew back. Then

he struck again at Ben, and instantly both slipped on the moist grass and fell directly into each other's clutches. The Igorrote was a powerful warrior, and grasped Ben's throat with the tightness of a steel band.

Ben tried to cry out, but not a sound could he make. His eyes bulged from their sockets, and he felt his breath leaving him. A second Igorrote leaped forward to hit him on the head with a war club, such as some of the Igorrote still insisted upon carrying. Of the use of rifles this tribe of the Filipinos knew little or nothing.

"Back, ye nager!" came in Dan Casey's voice, and there followed a sickening thud, and down went the enemy with the club, his head split open by a blow from the Irish volunteer's gun-stock. Casey then aimed a second blow at the rebel who had hold of Ben, but not wishing to receive such a dose as had been meted out to his companion, the other Igorrote sprang up, butted Casey in the stomach with his head, thus landing the Irishman on his back, and then ran for his life toward the nearest shelter of brush.

"Oh, be gracious! To look at that now!" spluttered the Irishman as he arose. "But I got

wan av thim, anyhow, captain," he added, with a jerk of his thumb toward the Igorrote, who lay with a broken head.

"Yes, Casey; and you saved me, too," returned Ben, earnestly. "You are worth two ordinary men;" and then captain and private drifted apart, as the tide of battle rolled forward.

The top of the hill was gained, but for once the insurgents did not know when they were whipped, and held to their guns until more than half of their number were either killed or wounded. The contest raged to the right and the left of the battery, and this was fortunate, for seeing they could not hold the pieces, some of the rebels overcharged one of the guns and set it off, blowing it into a thousand pieces. Then the main body retreated into the jungle, carrying a few of their wounded with them.

By this time it was raining again, and the downpour on the top of the hill was so great that little could be seen of the condition of affairs at a distance. Sending word that the hill was taken and one old-fashioned Spanish field-piece captured, Major Morris rallied his battalion around him and stood on the defensive. But the rebels

had had enough of fighting for the present, and once again took up the retreat in the direction of San Isidro.

"I reckon that was hot enough for anybody," said the major, as he stalked up to Ben and the other captains under him. "I wonder if anybody was killed by the explosion of that old cannon?"

"Nobody was killed, but several were wounded," answered one of the captains. "The rebel who charged her up and then fired her had lots of nerve," he added.

Word soon came back from General Lawton that the battalion should hold the hill until further orders. The situation was not a pleasant one, but orders must be obeyed, and the various companies proceeded to make themselves as comfortable as possible, which was not saying much, since the top of the hill afforded little or no shelter. One company was detailed to do picket duty, but a little scouting soon proved that the rebels were a mile or more distant.

When the main body of the troops under General Lawton marched into Maasin, they found the pretty little town all but deserted. In a few of the huts the inhabitants remained, having hung

out dirty white rags to show that they were *amigos*. Here were also numerous "Chinos" or Chinese, some of mixed blood, and all ready to do anything for the American soldiers, provided they were paid for it. Natives and "Chinos" went about bared to the waist, casting fearful eyes at those who had so suddenly disturbed the peace of their homesteads, for the inhabitants of Maasin were peaceably inclined, and took but little interest in the war Aguinaldo and his followers had instituted.

"Well, we are one step nearer to San Isidro," remarked Gilbert, when he got the chance to talk to Ben. "I suppose we can't get there any too quick for you."

"I don't know, Gilbert. You must remember that while Larry may be near San Isidro now, he may be miles off when we reach there. These Filipinos change their capital and their prisons as quickly as a flea jumps."

"Never mind, we'll keep them on the jump until they drop," answered the young Southerner. "They can't stand up before us forever."

"To my way of thinking, I don't believe this war will come to definite end, Gilbert."

"What do you mean, Ben? They have got to stop sometime — or else we have got to stop."

"These Filipinos are not pulling together — on the contrary, they are split up into half a dozen factions. If we defeat one faction, the others will still keep on, and, besides that, the worst of the rebels are of Malayan blood, pirates and bandits. I believe after we have whipped them as an army they will still keep on fighting in small bodies, somewhat after the order of the brigands in Mexico and northern Africa. With the mountains to fly to, such brigands could keep on worrying an American army for years."

"Possibly; but when the main body of the natives see what we want to do for them, they'll be as anxious as we to wipe out such brigands, and with their own people after them, life will be pretty uncomfortable, I'll wager. To be sure, there will always be robbers, just as there are outlaws and train-wreckers in the western states of our own country."

Some of the men had found a small opening between the rocks, and over this had hung their tents, making a rude shelter which Ben and Gilbert were glad to share with them. In the crowd were Casey and Stummer, and the latter busied himself in

trying to make a cup of hot chocolate over a handful of dry twigs found in the shelter. The attempt was hardly a success, yet the drink was better for the convalescent than either water or liquor would have been.

"Sure, an' if this shtorm kapes up, we'll all be dhrowned out," was Casey's comment, as he shifted his feet to keep them out of a rising puddle. "Now who would think the water would rise on the top av a hill. Things do be mighty peculiar in Luzon, an' that's a fact."

"Never mind, Casey, you'll get back home some day," put in another soldier. "And in years to come you'll be telling your grandchildren what a mighty fighter you were out in the state of Luzon, recently annexed to the United States, along with the state of Hawaii." And a laugh went up over the conceit.

"Sure an' you ton't haf nodding to grumble ofer of you ton't git shot," said Stummer.

"Or don't get taken down with disease," put in another. "My, but I pity the fellows with fever and chills and malaria, and the other things that are just as bad. I believe about one-fifth of the army is now on the sick list."

"Some of the boys are going to send a petition to

General Otis for relief. They say they can't stand it much longer."

So the talk went on, both Ben and Gilbert saying but little. Presently Major Morris poked his nose into the opening.

"I think you boys had better come out of there," he said shortly.

"Why, major — " began several.

"Are we to advance?" asked others.

"No, we are not going to advance, unless it's skyward," continued the major. "Either come out of that, or else put out that fire, and be mighty careful about it."

"The fire ain't doing no harm," grumbled a private, under his breath.

"I don't believe the enemy can see the smoke in this rain," suggested another, thinking that this was the cause of their being disturbed.

"I'm not thinking of the enemy, boys, I'm thinking of you. Better come out, and then we'll put out that fire as carefully as we can."

Seeing that something unusual was in the wind, one after another of the officers and privates came forth from the hollow, Stummer giving the fire a kick as he passed. As soon as they were out-

side they surrounded the commander of the first battalion.

"Now, boys, do you know why I called you out?" asked Major Morris, with just the suspicion of a twinkle in his clear eyes.

"No, why was it?" came from a dozen voices.

"Because I wanted to save your lives," was the quiet response.

"Save our lives, major? You must be joking."

"No, I am not joking. We have just captured one of the rebel gunners, who was in command of the piece that was blown to atoms. He says that this hollow, where you had your camp-fire, was their powder magazine, and that they left all of a hundred and fifty pounds of powder stored there, hidden under the moss and dead leaves."

CHAPTER XXII

THE RESULT OF AN AMBUSH

"GOOD gracious, do you mean to say we have been camping over a powder magazine?" gasped Gilbert, as soon as he could speak.

"Sure, an' it's a wondher we wasn't all blowed to hivin!" came from Dan Casey.

"Und I boil mine chocolate so calmly as you blease," put in Carl Stummer, with a shudder. "Py chiminy, I ton't vos build no fire no more bis I vos sure of mine ground."

For several minutes the excitement was intense, and all of the soldiers retreated to a considerable distance from the hollow which had proved such a comfortable shelter.

Presently, however, Ben, Gilbert, and several others mustered up courage enough to go back and haul down the coverings put up. Then came another heavy downpour of rain, which speedily extinguished the fire; and the danger of an explosion was past.

An examination under the rocks proved that the Filipino gunner had told the truth. The powder was there, in big cans bearing the old Spanish stamp. Some was marked 1876, and was so old as to be practically worthless.

"They ought to have shot that off in honor of our centennial," remarked the young captain. "I don't wonder the rebels can't hit anything. This powder has no carrying power left to it."

Nevertheless the powder was carted off and added to the American stock. Then General Lawton rode up and Major Morris told in detail what had been accomplished.

With the fall of Maasin came another day of much-needed rest for the majority of the troops under General Lawton. In the meantime, while these soldiers were advancing from Angat upon San Isidro, the command under General MacArthur was far from idle. The Filipino commissioners wanted a three months' armistice, in order that the terms of a peace might be discussed, but to this the Americans would not listen, as they felt the enemy wished mainly to gain time in which to reorganize their shattered forces.

MacArthur's command was now in possession of

Calumpit on the railroad, and Apalit, just above, on the Rio Grande; while the rebels in this territory began to mass at St. Tomas and at San Fernando, still further northward on the railroad. On May the 4th MacArthur's division set out from Apalit, with Hale's command on the right wing and Wheaton's on the left.

It was not supposed that the rebels would make a serious stand short of San Fernando, but at St. Tomas they were developed in force, and a running fight ensued, lasting several hours, but without great loss to the Americans. Finding they could not hold St. Tomas, the Filipinos set fire to the town and fled. They were pursued with vigor, and attempted to burn San Fernando late that night, but failed to do so.

Early in the morning the fighting was renewed, and near San Fernando another battle took place. But the rebels were disheartened by the defeat at St. Tomas, and were soon on the run, and General Hale drove them a mile beyond San Fernando. In taking possession of the town it was found that several of the public buildings were in ruins. The defensive works here were very strong, and had the Filipinos stood up to their work like real fighters, they might have held the position for a long time.

On Saturday, May the 6th, Ben's command moved forward again, down the hill into Maasin, now patrolled by Americans, and then to the main road beyond.

"I don't believe we are in for much of a fight to-day," remarked the young captain to Gilmore, who had now been appointed first lieutenant.

"I reckon you are right," answered Gilmore. "The scouts haven't found any rebels within a mile."

"It would almost seem as if we could march straight through to San Isidro," went on Ben, thoughtfully. "I must say I never heard of such a campaign."

"They say General Lawton puts it down as a regular Indian campaign. But then the rebels don't do much fighting in the dark."

"They are sick of it, Gilmore. I believe they would give up in a minute if the leaders were only assured that they would come out whole, as the saying goes."

"Well, they've gone too far to come out whole, captain. General Aguinaldo may mean well, but he never went at this thing right. He ought to know that he isn't dealing with some third-rate power."

On went the regiment, about four hundred and

fifty strong now, for men were dropping out every day on acount of fever and other tropical troubles. Ben had had a little fever himself, but had dosed himself with quinine before it had a chance to permeate his system and bring him down on his back.

The advance led the regiment along a small stream lined with fading flowers and wild plantains and the ever present thorns and trailing vines. Birds were numerous, and here and there a sporting soldier could not resist the temptation to bring one of the feathered tribe down, to be cooked at the next resting place. Once the regiment stirred up a flock of wild turkeys, and a charge was made to capture the prizes, a charge that was as enthusing as one on the rebels. Soldiers are but human and must have their fun, no matter under what difficulties.

"It's a fine turkey dinner we'll be afther havin' to-day," remarked Dan Casey, as he hung one of the birds over his shoulder. He had scarcely spoken, when pop-pop went several Mausers in a thicket beyond, the bullets singing their strange tune in the leaves over the advancers' heads.

"Forward!" shouted Major Morris, who was in temporary command of the regiment, and away they went once more, to suddenly find themselves on

spongy soil which speedily let them down to their ankles. In the meantime the insurgents' fire became thicker than ever, and it looked as if they were caught in an ambush.

"Fire at will!" came the order. "To the left, boys, and make every shot tell!"

A roar of musketry drowned out the words, and immediately Ben's company found itself all but surrounded. To go into this quagmire had certainly been a grave error, but all leaders make mistakes sometimes; and Major Morris was suffering as greatly as his men.

The next half hour was one Ben never forgot. The rebels evidently thought they had the Americans at their mercy and pushed in closer and closer, until more than half of the contestants were fighting hand to hand. Many had exhausted their ammunition, and were using their bayonets or else handling their guns as clubs.

"Die!" cried one tall Tagal, as he flashed up before Ben with a bloody bolo. "Die!" he repeated in bad English, and made a lunge at the young captain. But Gilmore had his eye on the man, and the lieutenant's sword cut the bolo from the rebel's grasp.

"Good for you!" cried Ben. Then he drew a long breath, to think of the narrow escape he had had. The native, his hand flowing with blood, retreated as suddenly as he had approached.

The tide of the battle was now taking Americans and insurgents toward a cane-brake. The rebels still fought desperately, but they were beginning to lose confidence, for the Americans were pushing them hard.

But now came a cheer from the rear, and Company B rushed up to the aid of Ben's command. To the young captain's astonishment, Gilbert was in command, all the upper officers being either killed or wounded.

"Gilbert!" he called, but had no time to say more. But the young Southerner heard and waved the sword he had picked up. Soon the two companies were fighting shoulder to shoulder, and the enemy were driven out into the cane-field, and then into a meadow. Here they tried to make a stand, around an old rice-house, and it took another half hour to dislodge them. But when they did retreat at last, they went in great haste, many leaving their weapons and outfits behind them.

The fighting over, Ben started to find the major.

Gilbert accompanied him. Their first hunt for the commander, however, was unsuccessful.

"It's queer," was Ben's comment. "I trust he isn't dead in the bushes."

The hunt gradually brought them to a trail through the jungle, and presently Gilbert heard a faint moan for help. Running in the direction, they found a soldier of Company C lying on some moss, his knee shattered from a Mauser bullet.

"Oh, the pain!" groaned the poor fellow. "Help me, won't you?"

"We'll do all we can for you," answered Ben, and while he went to work, Gilbert ran back to bring up the hospital corps with a stretcher.

"You want to go after Major Morris," said the wounded soldier, as soon as he felt comfortable enough to talk.

"We are looking for Major Morris," replied Ben, much astonished. "Where is he?"

"He was knocked over by one of the Dagos, and then three of 'em carried him away."

This was certainly news, and Ben waited impatiently for Gilbert to get back. As soon as the young Southerner returned, both asked the

wounded soldier in what direction the captured major had been taken.

"They went through the cane-brake," was the answer. "You'll find the trail easily enough, I think, if you look for it. One of the rebs wore boots with high heels, so you can't miss 'em."

The wounded man did his best to point out the right direction, and was then taken back to the hospital tent. Without delay Ben called Ralph Sorrel and half a dozen others to his aid.

"We must go after Major Morris, and at once," he said. "Are you ready to undertake the work? It may be a dangerous proceeding."

"We're with yer, cap'n," answered Sorrel, and his sentiment was that of all of the others.

The trail into the cane-brake was followed without much difficulty, and the party of eight advanced as rapidly as the nature of the ground permitted. The storm had cleared off the night before, and the sun shone down hotly, making the air in the brake suffocating.

"This yere is a putty big cane-brake, an' no error," remarked Sorrel, after a quarter of a mile had been covered. "Cap'n, it won't do fer us to turn ourselves about an' git lost."

"We'll stick to the one trail," answered Ben. "As yet I've seen no side trails, although I've been watching every foot of the ground that we crossed."

"Nor I, cap'n, — an' don't wan't to, neither," added the tall mountaineer.

A little further on was a clearing, in the centre of which stood a small cane-house. Halting on the edge of the opening, they beheld several Filipinos on guard outside the house. In the doorway, with his back to the opening, stood Major Morris, his hands bound behind him.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE TORNADO IN THE CANE-BRAKE

"I RECKON we have got 'em tight, cap'n," came from Sorrel, as the party of Americans came to a halt and surveyed the scene before them.

"It depends upon how many of them there are," answered Ben. "Sorrel, supposing you skirt the clearing and try to count noses."

The Tennesseean was willing, and started off, taking Gilbert with him. He was gone probably ten minutes.

"Not more than ten at the most," he reported. "And of that number two are wounded and have their arms in slings."

"Any other prisoners besides Major Morris?"

"Not that we could see," came from Gilbert. "We could rush them easily enough if it wasn't for the major," he added.

"We don't want any harm to befall Major Morris," said Ben, thoughtfully. "If we— The rebels have discovered us, look out!"

Ben had scarcely finished when a report rang out and a bullet whizzed over their heads. One of the soldiers outside of the cane-house had seen two of the Americans and had fired upon them.

The discharge of the firearm caused Major Morris to turn around, and as he did so Ben waved his cap at his commander, and was recognized. Then two of the insurgents hurried the major out of sight.

The Americans were not slow to return the fire; and, although nobody was struck, the insurgents lost no time in disappearing from view. A lull followed, as both sides tried to determine what was best to be done next.

"Here comes a flag of truce," said Gilbert, presently, as a rebel appeared, holding up a white rag. "If I were you, I wouldn't honor it."

"I would like to hear what they have to say," replied Ben, quietly.

"But remember how they fired on the other flag of truce," insisted the young Southerner. "You'll be running your head into a lion's mouth."

"Sorrel, keep that man covered," said Ben. "I won't move out any further than he does."

"If you go, I'll go with you," said Gilbert, promptly.

He would not be put off, and together Ben and he moved into the opening, Ben holding up a new handkerchief as he walked. The rebel at once halted, as if expecting them to come over to where he stood.

"You come over here!" cried Gilbert, and waved his hand.

There was a full minute's delay, and then of a sudden the rebel threw down his white flag and sped toward the house. At the same time three reports rang out, and Gilbert fell back, struck in the shoulder.

"What did I tell you!" he gasped. "They are treacherous to the last degree!" And then the young Southerner fainted.

As just mentioned, three reports had rung out, but only two had come from the house. The third came from Ralph Sorrel's weapon, and the man who had carried the pretended flag of truce fell dead in his tracks.

The dastardly attack angered Ben beyond endurance, and leaving Gilbert resting comfortably on some cut cane, he leaped to the front. "Come, boys, we will root them out!" he cried, and ran on toward the house as fast as he could, firing as he

went. Sorrel was at his heels, and the others fired, each "red-hot" as they afterward expressed it.

The insurgents saw them coming and fired several shots, but nobody was struck, and in a trice the house was surrounded. Then Major Morris came bounding through a window, and it was Ben who cut his bonds with a pocket-knife.

"I saw it all," exclaimed the major. "Go for them, men, every one of the rascals deserves death!" And stooping over the dead rebel, he took from his bosom a bolo and joined in the attack. "They are a pack of cowards — a mere set of camp followers."

The major was right; the rebels in the house were no regularly organized body, and at the first sign of real peril they fled by the back way, over a ditch and straight for the nearest jungle. But our friends were determined that they should not escape thus easily, and pursued them for nearly half a mile, killing one more and wounding three others. Long afterward they learned that those who had thus forfeited their lives were bandits from the mountains back of San Isidro. They had joined the forces under General Aguinaldo, merely for the booty to be picked up in the towns through which the rebel army passed.

As soon as the contest had come to an end, Ben hurried back to where he had left Gilbert. The wound from which the young Southerner was suffering was painful, but not dangerous. Yet it was likely to put Gilbert in the hospital for the best part of a month.

"It's too bad — I thought I could see the thing through to the end," said Gilbert, shaking his head dolefully.

"You'll have to take your dose as I did," answered Ben. "I am glad it is not serious. Our regiment couldn't afford to lose such a brave fellow as you."

"Brave? Didn't I hang back until you proposed to go out alone, Ben? If anybody was brave, it was you," and then Gilbert turned his face away to conceal the pain that was coming on.

The hospital corps was so busy that Gilbert could not be carried back of the firing line for some time. Feeling that there would be no more fighting that day, Ben decided to remain by his old chum, and requested Sorrel to do likewise, leaving the others to accompany Major Morris back to the command proper. In the meantime, a skirmish line was stretched to the north of the cane-brake, that the

insurgents might not regain any of the lost territory.

It was frightfully hot, but scarcely had Major Morris left with his party than a faint breeze sprang up which gradually increased to a fair-sized wind. Making Gilbert as comfortable as possible under some of the tallest of the cane, Ben and Sorrel sat down beside him to do what they could to help him forget his pain.

The three had been sitting in the shade for the best part of half an hour, and Sorrel was sharpening his knife on the side leather of his shoe, when, glancing up, Ben noticed a peculiar cloud in the sky overhead.

"That looks rather queer," he remarked. "Does that denote a wind-storm, Sorrel?"

"It denotes something, that's sartin," responded the mountaineer, surveying the cloud with care. "It's something I ain't seed out yere yit," and he leaped to his feet.

The cloud was about as large as a barrel in appearance, and of a deep black color. It seemed to be whirling around and around, and as it came forward began to expand. Then it shot off to the southward, but not out of sight.

"I'm glad it's gone," said Gilbert, who had roused up to watch the strange thing. "I don't want to get caught in a western cyclone — and that cloud looks like those I have heard described."

"The rainy season is coming on here, and I presume we are bound to have more or less tornadoes," answered Ben. "They say that last year they were something awful along the seacoast."

The cloud was circling around the southern horizon, but now it turned once again and came slowly toward them. While it was yet quarter of a mile away, it shot down to earth and a strange humming sound reached their ears, followed by a whistling that caused each of them to shiver.

"It's a whirlwind!" yelled Sorrel. "Come into yonder hollow, cap'n!" and he caught hold of Gilbert and lifted him up. The hollow he mentioned was less than fifty feet away, yet to reach it in time was almost impossible, so swiftly did the tornado approach them. The air became black as night and was filled with cane, grass, and branches of trees. It struck the house in the clearing, and with a single mighty crash the structure went up into the air, to fall with another crash a hundred yards beyond.

Running with the tall Tennesseean, Ben pitched

into the hollow just as the first of the tornado hurled itself at them. Down came the mountaineer, but taking good care that Gilbert should not be hurt by his quick leap. Then all fell flat, with their faces to earth.

It was like some horrible nightmare to Ben, — the whistling wind and the strange humming, the blackness, and the whirling cane and tree limbs. In some places the ground was furrowed up as by a plough, and down on their heads came dirt and grass, and then a shower of stalks that buried them completely. And still the wind kept up, in a madder gallop than ever. Ben felt as if every moment was going to be his last.

The time was an age; yet by the watch it was not yet five minutes when the tornado had departed, leaving its track of ruin behind. But still the party of three under the cane-stalks lay still, wondering if it was safe to get up.

"Do yer calkerlate it's over, cap'n?" came from Sorrel, after a painful pause.

"It appears to be, but there is no telling what such a thing will do next," answered the young captain, as he pressed on the stalks over him, and got up. "Gilbert, are you hurt?"

"No," came with a gasp. "But, Ben, that was — was a terror, wasn't it?"

"It was, Gilbert, and something I never want to witness again."

By this time Sorrel was also on his feet and hauling Gilbert into daylight. The cloud was gone, and the sun shone as brightly as ever. But at a great distance they saw the tornado sweeping up into the mountains.

"We are well out of it," was Ben's comment, as they watched the cloud until it was out of sight. "That played sad havoc here. I wonder what it will do in the mountains?"

No one could answer that question, and no one tried. Ben would have been very much surprised had anybody told him that the same tornado which had visited him was also to visit his brother Larry. But so it proved, as we shall speedily see.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE FLIGHT FOR LIBERTY

"WELL, this is getting too monotonous for anything."

It was Larry who spoke, and he sat on the stump of a tree at the mouth of a wide cave, gazing disconsolately at a fire which several insurgents were trying to build.

The place was on the top of a high hill, backed up by still higher mountains. On every hand were sharp rocks and trees, with a tangle of thorns. Small wonder, then, that Aguinaldo and his cohorts considered these fastnesses inaccessible for American troops. No regular body could have gotten to such a place, and to forward supplies hither was totally out of the question.

The rebels numbered fifteen, all mountaineers and strong. At General Luna's request they had brought ten prisoners to the spot, and the other prisoners were to come up some time later. Why the Filipinos thus divided the men they had taken is not definitely

known, yet divided they were, until some escaped and others died or were given up.

Since Larry had been captured he had passed through half a dozen different hands. It must be said he had been treated fairly well, better, perhaps, than many of my readers may suppose. To be sure, his clothing was in rags and his shoes were almost minus their soles, but in these respects he was no worse off than those who kept him captive. Then, too, the food given him was very plain, but the rebels ate the same, and to complain, therefore, would have been worse than useless.

Larry had missed Barton Brownell, for the pair had been fairly friendly, as we know. With the transferal to new quarters the young sailor had struck up an acquaintanceship with Dan Leroy, one of the *Yorktown's* men, also a prisoner. A number of the sailors from the *Yorktown* — in fact, a boatload, had been captured, but Leroy had become separated from his messmates at the very start.

"Yes, it is monotonous, lad," said Leroy, who was resting at Larry's feet. "But, as I've said a hundred times afore, we can't help ourselves, consequently, make the best on it. Ain't that sound argyment, lad?"

"I reckon so, Leroy, but — but — "

"When ye git as old as I am you'll see things in a different light. We can't complain o' the treatment here, lad."

"But I would like to know how the war is going, and if my brother knows I am alive."

"Reckon the war is goin' agin the Tagals, or they wouldn't be a-pushing back into the mountains like this."

"It's a wonder they don't try to exchange us."

At this Dan Leroy smiled grimly. "Might be as how they consider us too vallyble," he suggested. He was a short, stout fellow, much given to joking, and rarely out of good humor.

It was about the middle of the afternoon, and from a long distance came the sounds of firing. But the booming came from big field-pieces, so Larry knew it must be far away, and so it gave him small hope.

The rebels had just brought in some fresh meat, procured from the town at the foot of the long hill, and they speedily proceeded to make a beef stew with rice and yams. The smell was appetizing, and as nobody had had a square meal that day, Larry brightened over the prospect.

The cave in the hillside was irregular in shape, running back to a series of openings which nobody had ever yet explored. In this cave the insurgents kept some of their supplies, brought up from San Fernando, San Isidro, and other places. It was a fact that Aguinaldo hardly knew where to "jump" next.

Before nightfall the dinner was ready, and the chief of the rebels had the prisoners supplied with bowls of the stew. "Eat all of eet," he said, with a grin. "For maybe no geet such t'ings to-morrow."

"Thanks, we'll fill up then," responded Larry, and set to with a will, as did all the other prisoners.

The captives were unarmed, and though the rebels watched them, they were allowed more or less of the freedom of the camp. Finishing his bowl of stew, Larry leaned over to where Leroy sat.

"Leroy, if we can manage to get a kettle of that stew, I'll be for trying to get away to-night," he whispered.

"And how are ye going to get it, lad?" asked the sailor.

"Wait and you will see," was the answer, and Larry arose and sauntered over toward the fire.

"I spilt some of the stew on the ground," he said, which was true, although the amount had not been large. "Can I have more?"

"Yes, take what you will," returned the insurgent chief, who felt in good humor, through having obtained a leave of absence, to start on the morning following. "And give some to your friends. We'll fill up for once."

"Thank you," answered Larry, and hurried to the other prisoners with the big pot from over the fire. The prisoners had a large tin kettle for water, fitted with a cover so that bugs might be kept out, and this he filled to the brim, and also gave the others all they wished.

"Going to eat all of that?" queried one of the men, with a short laugh.

"Sometime — not now," answered Larry. Then he took the pot back to the fire and carried his bowl and the kettle into the cave. At once Leroy followed him.

"And now, what's this nonsense you're talkin' about running away?" demanded the *Yorktown* sailor, as soon as they were alone.

"I'm going to try my luck to-night, Leroy. If you don't want to go, you can stay with the others."

"But how are you going? There's a guard around the foot of the hill, and they will shoot you on sight."

"I'm not going to try the foot of the hill — at least, not this side of it."

"Well, you can't get to the other, for that cliff over this cave is in the way."

"I'm going to explore the caves back of this. They must lead to somewhere."

The old sailor shook his head. "More'n likely they lead to the bowels of the earth. You'll fall into some pitfall, and that will be the end of you."

"I'll light a torch as soon as I am out of sight of this place, and I'll be very careful where I step."

"This cave may be as big as the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky. You'll get lost in one of the chambers and never find your way out."

"I'll have to risk that. But I'm bound to try it — if they give me the chance."

"You're foolish. Why, confound it, I've half of a mind to report the scheme."

"Oh, Leroy, surely you won't do that."

"I mean just to save you from yourself, Larry."

"I don't intend to remain a prisoner until I am

baldheaded, Leroy. I'm going to try to escape — and that's the end of it."

"Will you take any of the others along?"

"If they want to go."

"There won't a soul go — and I know it," responded the stout sailor, in positive tones.

When the other prisoners came in, he told them of Larry's plan. One and all of them agreed it was foolhardy.

"I don't believe there is any opening," said one. "Or if there is, it's so high up in the mountains that you'll never reach it."

"And what are you going to do for eating? That kettle of stew won't last forever," said another.

So the talk ran on, but the more he was opposed, the more headstrong did Larry become — and that, as old readers know, was very much like him.

"I shall go, and good-bye to all of you," he said, in conclusion. And then he shook hands with one after another, Leroy last of all. The *Yorktown's* man was trembling.

"I hate ter see ye do it, lad," he said. "It seems like going to death, but — but — hang it, I'll go along, so there!"

"But you needn't if you don't wish to," protested the youth. "I am not afraid to go alone."

"But I am a-going, and we'll sink or swim together, Larry. Who else goes?"

Dan Leroy looked from one face to the next. But not another prisoner spoke, for each had taken a short walk to the rear caves and seen quite enough of them. Then a guard came in, and the strange meeting broke up immediately.

The prisoners lay down to rest, but not one of them could go to sleep. All of the others were waiting for Larry and Leroy's departure. At last, satisfied that all was right for the night, the guard went outside, to join several of his companions around the camp-fire.

"Now, then," whispered Larry, and arose, to be followed immediately by Dan Leroy. The kettle secured, they hurried for the rear of the outer cave, without so much as looking at the others, who raised up to watch their shadowy disappearance.

The flight for liberty had begun. Would it succeed or fail?

CHAPTER XXV

THE CAVES UNDER THE MOUNTAIN

FOR a distance of five hundred feet the way was known to both Larry and his sailor friend, and the pair passed along swiftly, guided in part by the flickering rays from the camp-fire outside of the main cave.

"Have a care now, lad," whispered Leroy, as they reached a narrow passage, which turned first to the left and then upward. "The roof is low, and you don't want for to dash your brains out on the rocks."

"Never fear but I'll be as careful as I can," responded the youth, feeling his way along. "Better keep close, Leroy, that we don't become separated."

The turn made, it was no easy matter to ascend the sloping floor, with here and there a rough bowlder to cross, or a hollow in which one might fall and break a leg without half trying, as the

Yorktown sailor said. Presently Leroy called a halt.

"Better light the torch now, Larry."

"I was going to save it," was the reply. "There is no telling how long we may have to depend upon it."

"That is true; but it's no longer safe to walk in this pitchy darkness."

Leroy was provided with matches, used in smoking his pipe, which had not been denied him, and striking one he set fire to an end of the dry cedar branch which Larry had laid away over a week before, when the thought of running away had first crossed his mind. At the start the branch spluttered wofully and threatened to go out, but by coaxing it remained lit, and presently burst into a flame that was sufficient to see by for a circle of twenty or thirty feet.

On they plodded, up an incline that seemed to have no end, and then around another turn. Here the chamber widened out, and beyond there were branches, two to the left and one to the right.

"This is as far as I've ever been," said the boy. "The passages beyond seemed to lead downward for part of the way, and it's impossible to judge

On they plodded, up an incline that seemed to have no end.
—*Page 236.*

which is the best to take. But I was of a mind to try that one on the right."

"Well, I reckon as how the right ought to be right," laughed Leroy. "If it ain't, all we can do is to come back to here an' try over again, eh?"

"We haven't got time to waste in experimenting, Leroy. This is a serious business. We are liable now to be shot on sight."

"An' nobody knows thet better nor Dan Leroy, your humble servant. An' if you say try one o' the other passages, I'm jes' as willin'."

"No, we'll take that on the right," returned the youth, and started onward without further delay.

The passage was a crooked one, not over ten feet wide in any one part, and but little over the height of a man. At one place a great rock blocked the way, and over this they went on their hands and knees.

"Kind o' a tight squeeze," remarked Leroy. "If that rock war a bit bigger, we wouldn't be able to git over it at all."

"Hark!" cried Larry, coming to a halt. "What is that, somebody calling?"

They listened, and from a distance ahead made out a low murmur of some kind. "It's water

running over the rocks," cried Leroy. "I hope it's a river leading to the outer world."

"Oh, so do I!" ejaculated the boy, and both started onward eagerly. Long before the fall of water was gained they found themselves splashing in an underground stream up to their ankles. The waterfall was underground, coming from the rocks overhead and running into the stream, which, in turn, sank out of sight some distance further on.

"Nothing in that," muttered Leroy, his face falling.

Nevertheless, they stopped for a drink, for the tramp through the caves had made them thirsty. The old sailor held the torch, while Larry carried the kettle. It was well that the top of the kettle was on tight, otherwise the contents would have been spilled long before this.

Beyond the waterfall the cave opened out once more in fan shape, the roof running upward to a high arch, from which hung stupendous stalactites of white and brown. Here the water dripped down in the form of a fine rain.

"We're in a shower, lad, even though we are underground," remarked Leroy. "I must say I hope this don't last. If it does, we'll soon be wet

to the skin." The vaulted cave soon came to an end, however, and now they found themselves in an opening cut up into a hundred different chambers, like a coal mine supported by arches. Each looked at the other in perplexity.

"We can easily miss the way here," said Larry, soberly. "We had better lay out a course and stick to it."

"Right you are, lad." Leroy pointed with his hand. "This seems as good a trail as any. Shall we follow it?"

"Yes." And forward it was again. Presently they came to another chamber, and here the slope was again upward, much to their satisfaction. "If we keep on going upward, we are bound to get out at the top, sometime," was the way Larry calculated.

Climbing now became difficult, and in a number of places each had to help the other along. Then came a wall twelve feet high, and here they were compelled to halt.

"It looks as if we were blocked," remarked the *Yorktown* sailor after an examination.

"I'm not going to give up yet," answered the boy. "If we can't get up any other way, we can

build a stairs with those loose stones we just passed."

"Hurrah! you've solved the difficulty!" exclaimed the old sailor, and they set to work with a will. But rolling and lifting the stones into place was no mean job, and when at last they were able to pull themselves to the passageway above, both were utterly worn out and glad enough to sit down. The rest lasted longer than either had intended, for Leroy, who had not slept well the night before, dozed off, and Larry was not of a heart to wake him up. So the boy went to sleep too, and neither awakened until early morning.

"Hullo! what's this?" cried Leroy, the first to open his eyes. All was so dark about him — Larry having extinguished the torch — that for the minute he could not collect his senses. Putting out his hand he touched the youth on the face, and Larry awoke instantly.

They were both hungry, and lighting the torch again, warmed up the kettle of stew, and then ate about one-third of the stuff. "Touches the spot," cried Leroy, smacking his lips. He could have eaten much more, but knew it was best to be careful of their supply until the outer world was gained.

Much refreshed by their sleep, but somewhat stiff from the dampness and the unaccustomed work of the evening before, they proceed on their way, still climbing upward and still in a darkness, that was only partly dispelled by the feeble glare of the torch, which was now growing alarmingly small.

"The light won't last more than a couple o' hours," said Leroy. "Perhaps we had better split the stick in two." This was done, and thus the feeble light was reduced one-half.

Would the caves never come to an end? Such was the question Larry asked himself over and over again. Was it possible that they were to journey so far only to find themselves trapped at last? The thought made him shiver, and he pushed on faster than ever.

"Do you know what I think?" said Leroy, an hour later. "I think we are moving around in a circle?"

"A circle?"

"Ay, lad. Don't you notice how the passageway keeps turning to the right?"

Larry had noticed it. "But we are going upward," he said.

"True; but who knows but what we'll be going downward presently."

Still they kept on, but now Larry's heart began to fail him. They had progressed so far, had made so many turns, that to get back would probably be impossible. The caves were so vast one might wander about in them forever — if one's food did not give out. Larry shivered again and clutched the precious kettle of stew tighter than ever. He was once more hungry, but resolved to wait until the pangs of hunger increased before reducing the stock of food.

The passageway was now level for a considerable distance, with here and there a rock to be climbed over or a crack to cross. Both had just made a leap over an opening several feet wide when Leroy set up a shout.

"What is it?" asked Larry, eagerly.

"Put the torch behind ye, lad, an' look ahead. Perhaps my eyes deceive me," answered the old sailor.

Larry did as requested, and gave a searching look up the passageway. No, there was no mistaking it — there was a faint glimmer of light coming from what appeared to be a bend. He, too, gave a shout, and both set off on a run.

As they sped onward the light became brighter and brighter, until the torch was hardly needed. They were running side by side, each trying to gain the outer air first.

"Look out!" suddenly yelled Leroy, and caught Larry by the arm. The old sailor could hardly stop, and had to throw himself flat, dragging the boy down on top of him.

A few feet beyond was an opening twelve to fifteen feet wide, running from side to side of the passageway. The walls of the opening were perpendicular, and the hole was so deep that when a stone was dropped into it they could scarcely hear the thing strike bottom.

"Here's a how-d'ye-do!" cried Leroy, gazing into the pit. "We can't jump across that, nohow!"

"A real good jumper might," answered Larry. "But I shouldn't want to try it. The other side seems to slope down toward the hole. What's to be done?"

Ah, that was the question. It looked as if their advance in that direction was cut off completely.

CHAPTER XXVI

BOXER THE SCOUT

MUCH chagrined, man and boy stood on the brink of the chasm before them and gazed at the other side. It was sloping, as Larry had said, and wet, which was worse. A jump, even for a trained athlete, would have been perilous in the extreme.

"Looks like we were stumped," remarked Leroy, laconically.

"And just as we were so near to yonder opening!" cried Larry, vexed beyond endurance. "If we only had a plank, or something."

He looked around, but nothing was at hand but the bare stone walls, with here and there a patch of dirt and a loose stone. He walked to one end of the hole.

"A fellow might climb along yonder shelf if he were a cat," he said dismally. "But I don't believe a human being could do it."

"No, and don't you go for to try it," put in the

old sailor. "If you do, you'll break your neck, sure as guns is guns."

"Well, we've got to do something, Leroy."

"So we have; an' I move we sit down an' eat a bite o' the stew. Maybe eatin' will put some new ideas into our heads."

"I'd rather wait until we gain the open air."

"But we can't make it — yet — so be content, lad. It's something to know thet the blue sky is beyond."

They sat down, and soon finished one-half of what remained of the mess in the kettle. Never had anything tasted sweeter, and it was only by the exercise of the greatest self-control that they kept back a portion of the food.

"Perhaps we'll have to go back, remember that," said Leroy, as he put the cover on the kettle once more.

"Go back? No, no, Leroy! I'll try jumping over first."

"I don't think I shall. Thet hole — What's that?"

A sound had reached the old sailor's ears, coming from some distance ahead. It was the sound of footsteps approaching.

"Somebody is coming!" whispered Larry, and

crouched down. Then a man put in an appearance, coming from the opposite end of the passageway. He was an American soldier, hatless and almost in tatters.

"Hullo there!" cried Larry, leaping up. "Oh, but I'm glad you came!"

At the cry the soldier stopped short in amazement. Larry's words echoed and reëchoed throughout the passage. He looked toward the pair at the chasm, but could make out little saving the torch which Leroy was holding.

"Who calls?" he asked at last.

"I called," answered the boy. "Can't you see us? We are two lost sailors, and we can't get over this beastly hole. Come this way, but be careful of where you step."

"You must be Americans by your voices. Am I right?"

"Yes; and you are an American, too," said Larry, as the soldier came closer. Soon he stood facing them, with a look of wonder on his bronzed features.

"How did you get here?" he demanded.

"It's a long story," answered Leroy. "We escaped from some rebels at the other end of this

cave, and we've been wandering around since last night. Are you alone, or are our forces outside of this hole?"

"General Lawton's troops are a good many miles from here," answered the soldier. "I am one of his scouts, and I became separated from our command and got up here to escape being hunted down by the crowd of Filipinos that was after me. They are in the woods just outside of this hole."

"Then you are all alone?" said Larry, his face falling a little.

"Yes, although I think a couple of our men must be in this vicinity. We are pressing the rebels pretty hard, you know."

The scout's name was George Boxer, and he was one of the best marksmen in Chief Young's command. He listened to their story with interest, and at once agreed to do what he could for them. They noted with satisfaction that he was provided with both a rifle and a pistol, and also a belt well filled with ammunition.

It was an easy matter for Boxer to make his way into the open air and find a fallen tree limb of sufficient thickness to throw over the chasm

as a make-shift bridge. As soon as the limb was secure, Larry and Leroy came over, and then the party of three made their way to the mouth of the cave.

It was a welcome sight to see the sky again and the sunshine, and Larry's eyes sparkled as he gazed down the mountain-side and at the vast panorama spread out before him. At their feet was a heavy jungle, and beyond a plain and a small hill, where a large body of insurgents were encamping.

"It's good to be in the fresh air again, eh, lad?" observed Leroy. "But I'm afraid we'll have a good bit o' trouble gettin' past them rebels," he added to George Boxer.

"We can't get past them in the daytime," answered the scout; "but I think we can make it after the sun goes down. And it will take us till sundown to get to the bottom of this mountain, if I am not mistaken."

Now they were in the open, it was decided to discard the kettle; and the three ate up what remained of the stew, along with the single ration which Boxer carried. Then they began the descent of the mountain-side, slipping over rocks

and dirt as best they could, and finding their way around many an ugly pitfall.

"I suppose you think it's queer I came up so far," said Boxer, as they hurried downward. "The truth is I was so closely pursued I didn't realize how far I was going. Those rebels can climb the mountains like so many wildcats. I'm afraid we'll never clean them out if they take a stand up here."

It was hot, and now Leroy gazed from time to time at the sky. "A storm or something is coming," he said.

"Yes, something is coming," added Boxer. "I can tell it by the way the birds are flying about. They seem to be troubled."

"I see a cloud away off to the southward," put in Larry. "It's not large, but it's mighty black."

No more was said just then upon the subject; and they continued their journey down the mountain-side until they came to a fair-sized stream, where they quenched their thirst and took a wash. They were about to go on again when Boxer held up his hand as a warning.

"Great gophers, boys, we are running right into

a nest of the rebels!" he whispered. "Back with you, before it is too late."

They looked ahead and saw that the scout was right. They started to go back; and as they turned, a Mauser rang out and a bullet clipped the bushes beside them.

"Discovered!" came from Leroy's lips. "Larry, I'm afraid the jig is up. Those Filipi—"

Crack! It was Boxer's rifle that rang out, and as the scout was a sharpshooter, it may be taken for granted that he brought down his man. Then the three set off on a run along the side of the mountain to where a slight rise of ground promised better hiding.

"We can't do much against such a crowd," said the scout. "But in a good spot we can hold out awhile, provided one of you can use my pistol."

"I can fire tolerably straight," answered Leroy, and took the weapon. Soon the rise was gained, and they plunged in behind a tangle of pines. The Filipinos were following them, although taking good care not to expose themselves needlessly to the fire of such a crack marksman as Boxer had proved himself to be.

From behind the tangle of growth, the three

Americans watched the skilful advance of the enemy with dismay. "They are trying to surround us!" whispered Boxer. Then like a flash his rifle went up. The report was followed by a yell of pain, and a Filipino fell into view from behind a tree less than fifty yards distant. The poor fellow was hit in the side, but managed to crawl back into cover again, groaning dismally.

Leroy also fired, a second later, aiming at a tall Tagal who was crossing a clearing to their left. If he hit his mark, the rebel gave no sign, but the man disappeared in a great hurry. Then came a crashing through the bushes below and to the left, proving that the Filipinos were massing in those directions.

"Perhaps we had better try to crawl away from this—" began Larry, when a humming sound caught his ear. At the same time the sky grew black.

"Look! look!" yelled Leroy. "What is this—the end of the world?"

All looked up. The humming had increased to a whistle, and now came a crashing of trees and brush mingled with the wild cries of the Filipinos as they rushed away toward a near-by

mountain stream. They knew what was coming, even if our friends did not.

And then the tornado was almost upon them. I say almost, for, thanks to an all-ruling Providence, it did not strike them fairly, but rushed to one side, where the Filipinos had been gathering. The light of day seemed to die out utterly, and the air was filled with flying débris and screaming birds and wild animals made homeless on the instant. The very earth seemed to quake with the violence of the trees uprooted, and branches and dirt flew all over the Americans, until they were buried as completely as Ben and his companions had been. Larry thought it was indeed the end of the world, and breathed a silent prayer that God might watch over him and those he loved.

At last the rushing wind ceased, and the crashing was lost in the distance. But the birds kept up their wild cries, and for several seconds neither Larry nor those with him moved, wondering if that was the end of the tornado, or if worse was to follow. But it was the end, and gradually they came forth one after another, to gaze on the mighty wreckage about them. It was Leroy who raised his hand solemnly to heaven.

"I thank God that we have been spared," he said, and Larry and the scout uttered an amen.

Whether or not to leave the vicinity was a question. At last, seeing no more of the enemy, they plucked up courage enough to move down the mountain-side once more. But the tornado had made the passage more difficult than ever, and several times they had to turn back. Nightfall found them still some distance from the plain, with yet another jungle to pass before the open would be gained.

"We might as well make a night of it here," said Boxer, and footsore and weary Larry and Leroy agreed with him. It was not long before all dropped asleep, too tired to stand guard, and hardly deeming that one was necessary.

The tornado had killed numerous birds and small animals, and it was easy to pick up a plentiful breakfast.

"I don't know about making a fire," said Leroy. "Those rebels may spot us before we are aware."

Yet they were too hungry to go without eating, and in the end they built a fire of the driest wood they could find, and while Boxer cooked the birds, Larry and the old sailor scattered the smoke with

their jackets, so that it might not go up in a cloud, and also kept their eyes open for the possible appearance of the rebels. But the tornado had scared the insurgents as much as it had anybody, and not one showed himself.

By eight o'clock they were once more on the way, Boxer leading with his gun ready for use, Larry in the centre, and Leroy bringing up the rear with the pistol.

They were just entering the jungle at the foot of the mountain when a strange moaning reached their ears and all halted. There was a silence, and then the moaning started up again.

"What is that?" questioned Larry. "It can't be a human being."

"I think I know what it is," returned the scout. "Wait here till I make sure," and he glided ahead and was soon lost to sight under a clump of tall trees which grew in somewhat of a clearing. Soon they heard him shouting for them to come on.

It was a water buffalo that was moaning. The beast had become caught under a partly fallen tree and could not release itself. It was a handsome animal and weighed a good many hundred pounds.

"Here's meat and to spare!" cried Boxer, and

drawing forth a hunting knife, he put the caribao out of his misery in short order. "This is some more work of that tornado," he went on, as he proceeded to cut out a choice steak. "We won't starve for the next forty-eight hours."

"I hope by that time we'll have reached the army," answered Larry, and took the portion of meat handed to him. It was not a dainty thing to carry, but he had to shoulder it, since Boxer and Leroy were carrying the weapons.

As they proceeded, the jungle appeared to become more dense, until it was next to impossible to make any progress. Yet they felt that each step was bringing them closer to the open plain and to a point where few natives were likely to be congregated. "If we once get down to the bottom, we'll be all right," said Boxer.

But the scout had not reckoned on the fact that there was a hollow at the base of the mountain, and that the heavy rains had filled this full to overflowing. It was Larry who first called attention to the fact that the ground was growing damp. Then of a sudden the whole party stepped into the water up to their ankles.

Here was a new dilemma to face, and each looked

at the others in anything but a happy mood. "Beats everything what luck we're having!" cried Leroy, in deep disgust. "I'd give a year's pay to be safe on board the *Yorktown* agin, keelhaul me if I wouldn't!"

"I suppose the best thing we can do is to march around the swamp-hole," replied Larry. "What do you say, Boxer?"

"Let us try it a bit further," replied the scout, and they moved forward with care. At first the ground appeared to grow better, but then they went down again halfway to their knees and in a muck that stuck to them like glue.

"It's no use, we'll have to go back," groaned Leroy, and turned about. Silently the others followed him, wondering where the adventure would end.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE DEPARTURE OF THE *OLYMPIA*

THE advances of both General MacArthur and General Lawton had been so far nothing but a series of successes, and so hard were the insurgents pressed, that they scarcely knew what to do next. Again they sued for peace, but as the Americans were not inclined to grant them anything until they had surrendered unconditionally, the war went on, but in more of a guerilla-fight fashion than ever.

Near San Fernando the rebels continued to tear up the railroad tracks, and likewise attacked a train of supplies, killing and wounding several who were on board. They also attacked several gunboats coming up the San Fernando River, keeping themselves safely hidden, in the meantime, behind high embankments thrown up along the stream. While this was going on General Aguinaldo called a council of war, at San Isidro, at which fifty-six of his main followers were present. By a vote it was found

that twenty were for peace, twenty for war, and sixteen wished to negotiate with the United States for better terms. This gathering gave rise to a rumor that the war would terminate inside of forty-eight hours. Alas! it was still to drag on for many months to come.

The day after the tornado found Ben safe in camp again, with Gilbert in the hospital receiving every attention. It was Sunday, and a day of rest for the majority of the troops. At a small tent a short service was held, and Ben walked over, to hear a very good sermon on man's duty toward God under any and all circumstances. The sermon was followed by the singing of several hymns, and the soldiers remained at the spot for an hour or more afterward, talking over the general situation.

"It always takes me back home to hear the preachin'," remarked Ralph Sorrel. "I'm mighty glad we have it. It shows we ain't no heathens, even though we air livin' a kind o' hit-an'-miss life a-followin' up these yere rebs."

On Monday the scouts went out to the front, and a small brush was had with a number of the insurgents in the vicinity of San Miguel de Mayumo. They reported that the Filipinos had a number of

intrenchments placed across the roads, but seemed to be retreating toward San Isidro.

"If Aguinaldo makes a stand anywhere, it will be at San Isidro," said Ben to Major Morris, as the two discussed the situation. "Oh, but I do wish we could have one big battle and finish this campaign!"

"How about the big battle going against us?" demanded the major, but with a twinkle in his eye.

"It would never go against us," answered the young captain, promptly, "and the insurgents know it. That is why they keep their distance."

The scouts had brought in a dozen or more prisoners, and among them were a Filipino and a Spaniard, both of whom could speak English quite fluently. As soon as he could obtain permission, Ben hurried over to have a talk with the prisoners.

He found that the Filipino had belonged to those having some of the American prisoners in charge.

"And do you know anything of my brother?" he asked eagerly. "He is a young sailor from the *Olympia*, and his name is Larry Russell."

"Yes, yes, I know him," answered the Filipino, nodding his head. "He was at the cave where they have kept some of the prisoners for a long time."

And he described Larry so minutely that Ben felt there could be no mistake about the matter.

"Is my brother well? How do they treat him? Please tell me the truth."

"You may not believe it, but we treat our prisoners good," said the Filipino. "And when I saw your brother last he was very well."

"And where is this prison cave?"

At this the insurgent shrugged his shoulder. "Now, *capitan*, you are asking me too much. I am pleased to tell you that your brother is safe. More than that I cannot tell, for it would not be right."

This was not encouraging, yet Ben could not help but admire the prisoner's loyalty to his cause. "Very well," he said. "I am thankful to know that my brother is well. I was afraid that prison life might make him sick."

A little later the young captain got the chance to talk to the Spanish prisoner, who was making an application for his release, claiming that he was friendly to the United States and had never encouraged the rebels. Seldom had the young captain met more of a gentleman than Señor Romano proved to be.

"Ah, the war is terrible! terrible!" said the

señor, after Ben had introduced himself. "It is bloodshed, bloodshed, all the time. Where it will end, Heaven alone knows — but I am afraid the Filipinos will be beaten far worse than was my own country."

"I think you are right there," replied Ben. "But we can't do anything for them now until they lay down their arms."

"The war has ruined hundreds of planters and merchants, — whole fortunes have been swept away, — and the insurgents have levied taxes which are beyond endurance. To some, Aguinaldo is their idol, but to me he is a base schemer who wants everything, and only for his own glory. But he cannot hold out much longer, — you are pressing him into the very mountains, — and once away from the civilization of the towns, his followers will become nothing but *banditti* — mark me if it is not so."

"You are a resident of Luzon?" went on Ben.

"Hardly. I belong in Spain — but I have lived here for several years."

"Do you know one Benedicto Lupez, or his brother José."

At this question the brow of Señor Romano darkened.

"Do I know them? Ah, yes, I know them only too well. They are rascals, villains, cheats of the worst order. I trust they are not your friends."

"Hardly, although I should like first-rate to meet them, and especially to meet Benedicto."

"And for what? Excuse my curiosity, but what can an American captain and gentleman like you have in common with Benedicto Lupez?"

"I want to get hold of some bank money that he carried off," answered the young captain, and told the story of the missing funds and the part the Spaniard was supposed to have played in their disappearance.

"It is like Lupez," answered Señor Romano. "He is wanted in Cuba for having swindled a rich aunt out of a small fortune; and in Manila you will find a hundred people who will tell you that both brothers are rascals to the last degree, although, so far, they have kept out of the clutches of the law — through bribery, I think."

"Not during General Otis's term of office?"

"No; before the city fell into your hands. The government was very corrupt and winked at Lupez's doings so long as he divided with certain officials."

"And what did he work at?"

"Land schemes and loan companies. He once got me interested in a land scheme, and his rascality cost me many dollars, and I came pretty near to going to prison in the bargain." Señor Romano paused a moment. "If your troops take San Isidro, you will have a good chance to catch both of the brothers."

"What! do you mean to say they are at San Isidro?" exclaimed the young captain.

"They are, or, at least, they were two or three days ago. How long they will stay there, I cannot say. They were at the council of war held by Aguinaldo's followers."

"I see." Ben mused for a moment. "Of course you do not know if they had the stolen money with them?"

"They appeared to have some money, for both were offered positions in the army, and that would not have happened had not they had funds to buy the offices with. They appeared to be very thick with a general named Porlar, — a tricky fellow of French-Malay blood. I believe the three had some scheme they wished to put through."

"Well, I'd like to catch the pair. I wonder

if Aguinaldo would keep them around him, if he knew their real characters?"

At this Señor Romano laughed outright. "You do not know how bad are some of the men around the arch rebel, *capitan*. He has some bad advisers, I can tell you that. To some of the worst of the crowd, Aguinaldo is but a figurehead."

The pair discussed the matter for half an hour; and during that time Ben became convinced that Señor Romano had small sympathy for the insurgents, and was certainly not of their number.

"I will do what I can for you, señor," he said, on parting. "I do not believe you will be kept a prisoner long." And the young captain was right on this score; the Spanish gentleman was released inside of forty-eight hours, and journeyed to Manila in company with a detachment bound for the capital of Luzon.

The two talks made Ben do a good deal of sober thinking. He now knew to a certainty that Larry was alive and well, and he knew also that Benedicto Lupez was at or near San Isidro, and more than likely had the stolen money on his person. "I wish we could push ahead without delay," he muttered. "I might make a splendid

strike all around. I know Larry is just aching to be at liberty once more."

But supplies were again slow in coming to the front, and General Lawton did not feel like risking his men when the Filipinos might surrender at any moment. So a delay of several days occurred, with only a little skirmish here and there to break the monotony.

"Hullo, here's news!" cried Major Morris, as he rushed up to Ben's quarters one morning. "Dewey is going to sail for the United States."

"With the *Olympia?*" queried the young captain.

"Yes. The warship leaves next Saturday, with all on board. Won't he get a rousing reception when he arrives home?"

"Larry won't be with him," said Ben.

"By Jove, captain, that's so. It's too bad, isn't it? I suppose he would like to go, too."

"I can't say as to that. Perhaps he would just as lief stay here and join some command on land, or some other ship, especially if he knew that my brother Walter was coming on. But I am sure he would like to see his old messmates off," concluded Ben.

Admiral Dewey started for the United States at four o'clock in the afternoon of Saturday, May 20. The departure proved a gala time, the harbor and shipping being decorated, and the other warships firing a salute. The bands played "Auld Lang Syne," "Home, Sweet Home," and "America," and the jackies crowded the tops to get a last look at the noble flagship as she slipped down the bay toward the China Sea, with the admiral standing on the bridge, hat in hand, and waving them a final adieu. In all the time he had been at Manila, Admiral Dewey had served his country well, and his home-coming was indeed to be one of grand triumph.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE ADVANCE UPON SAN ISIDRO

"WHY, Luke Striker, is it possible! I thought you had sailed for the United States on the *Olympia*."

"Well, ye hadn't no right to think that, captain," responded the old gunner, as he shook hands warmly. "It might be that the others could go away and leave Larry behind, but he's too much my boy for me to do that.—yes, sirree. When I hears as we were to set sail for the States, I goes up to the admiral himself, an' says I: 'Admiral,' says I, 'do you remember how Larry Russell an' yer humble servant comes on board of the *Olympia?*' says I. 'Yes,' says he. 'I remember it well,' says he. 'Well,' says I, 'Larry is ashore, a prisoner of the enemy,' says I. 'I don't want to go for to leave him, nohow. Can't you leave me behind,' says I. And he laughs and asks me all about Larry, and finally says I can

go ashore and report to Rear Admiral Watson — who is comin' on — sometime later. And here I am, come to the front, to find Larry, ef sech a thing is possible."

The old sailor's honest speech went straight to Ben's heart, and he saw very plainly how deep was Luke's affection for his younger brother. "You're a messmate worth having, Luke!" he exclaimed. "I don't wonder Larry thought so much of you."

"Avast, I'm only a common sea-dog at the best, captain, — an ef I remained behind to cast around fer the lad, ye mustn't think thet Jack Biddle an' the others have forgotten Larry, fer they ain't, not by a jugful. Every man jack o' them is his friend, an' was, almost from the start."

Luke had come up to the camp by way of Malolos, accompanying a pack-train of caribao carts carrying rations and army equipments. He had left the *Olympia* several days before, and had not waited to witness the departure of the flagship.

As Luke wished to remain with Ben, the latter lost no time in presenting the matter to Colonel Darcy and to Major Morris, and Luke was taken into the regiment camp as a cook, for he had once

been a cook on a merchantman, years before. The position was largely an honorary one, and the sailor was permitted to leave his pots and kettles whenever he pleased.

"It's good news," he said, when the young captain had told him what the prisoners had said about Larry and Benedicto Lupez. "I've an idee we'll get to Larry soon, an' down thet tarnal Spaniard in the bargain."

The conversation took place on Tuesday. On Wednesday orders came to strike camp, and the march of the regiment was taken toward San Isidro by way of Baluarte, a small village seven miles to the southeast of the new rebel capital. In the meantime, although the Americans were not aware of it, Aguinaldo was preparing to decamp, with his so-called congress, into the mountain fastnesses, still further northward.

"We are in for another fight," said Major Morris, as he came to Ben that afternoon. "And I've an idea it is going to be something to the finish."

"That means, then, that we are bound for San Isidro!" cried the young captain. "Hurrah! that's the best news I've heard in a week."

The regiment was soon on the road, spread out in proper battalion form. The day was close, and it looked as if a thunderstorm was at hand. The growth along the road was thick, and at certain points the overhanging branches had to be cut off that the troops might pass. The trail was bad, and often a gun, or wagon, had to stop so that a hole might be bridged over with bamboo poles. Here and there they passed a nipa hut, but these places were deserted, excepting in rare instances, where an aged native would stand at the door, holding up a white rag as a signal of surrender, or to show that he was an *amigo*, or friend.

"It's pitiable," said Ben to Major Morris, as they trudged along side by side. "I reckon some of these ignorant creatures have an idea that we have come to annihilate them."

"You can be sure that Aguinaldo and his followers have taught them something like that," replied the major. "Otherwise, they wouldn't look so terrified."

At one point in the road, they came to a tumbledown hut, at the doorway of which rested a woman and her three small children, all watching the soldiers with eyes full of terror. Going up to the

woman, Ben spoke kindly to her, but she immediately fled into the dilapidated structure, dragging her trio of offspring after her.

"You can't make friends that way," cried Major Morris. "They won't trust you. I've tried it more than once."

There was now a hill to climb, thick with tropical trees and brush. The regiment had scarcely covered a hundred feet of the ascent, when there came a volley of shots from a ridge beyond, which wounded two soldiers in the front rank.

"The rebels are in sight!" was the cry. "Come on, boys, let us drive 'em back! On to San Isidro!" And away went one battalion after another, fatigued by a two miles' tramp, but eager to engage once more in the fray. It was found that the insurgents had the ridge well fortified, and General Lawton at once spread out his troops in a semicircle, in the hope of surrounding the ridge and cutting off the defenders from the main body of Aguinaldo's army.

Ben's regiment was coming, "head on," for the top of the ridge. The way was over ground much broken by tree-stumps, rocks, and entangling vines, that brought many a soldier flat.

"Sure, an' it's a rigular fish-net!" spluttered Dan Casey, as he tried in vain to rise, with vines ensnaring both arms and legs. "I don't know but phwat a fellow wants a wire-cutter here, just as they had 'em in Cuby to cut the wire finces wid."

"Nefer mind, so long as we got by der dop of dot hill," answered Carl Stummer, as he hauled his mate out of the entanglement. "Be dankful dot you ain't parefooted by dem dorns." And on went both once more. There was many a slip and a tumble, but very little grumbling.

"Down!" The cry came from the front, and down went Ben's company into a little hollow, for the rebels had them in plain view now, and the two lines were less than three hundred yards apart. A volley from the insurgents followed, but nobody was struck.

"Forward twenty-five yards!" cried Ben, and up went the company for another dash. It was a soul-trying moment, and none felt it more than the young commander, who ran on ahead to inspire his men. He knew that at any instant a bullet might hit him to lay him low forever. But his "baptism of fire" had been complete, and he did not flinch.

"Hot work, this!" The words came from Gilmore as he came up the hill close to Ben. "It's going to be no picnic taking that ridge."

"True, Gilmore; but it's got to be done," answered the young commander. "Down!" he shouted, and again the company fell flat. Then began a firing at will, which lasted the best part of ten minutes. The insurgents, likewise, fired, and a corporal and a private were wounded and had to be carried to the rear.

Looking around, Ben espied Luke Striker in the ranks of Company D. The old sailor had provided himself with a rifle and an ammunition belt, and was popping away at a lively rate.

"I couldn't help it," said Luke, when the young captain came up to him. "It's the best fun I've had sence thet air muss in Manila Bay, when we blowed old Montojo out o' the water, off Cavite. Say, but we'll git to the top o' the hill afore long, jes' see ef we don't!" And Luke blazed away again, and so Ben left him.

The rest of the battalion was now closing in, and soon another advance was made, until the first line of the American troops was less than a hundred and fifty yards away from the insur-

gents' outer intrenchments. Then a yell came from a jungle on the left.

"What's that? more rebels?" cried Ben, and listened.

"No, no, the Filipinos are retreating!" came from a score of throats. "See, they are scattering like sheep! Up the hill, fellows; the fight is ours!" And a regular stampede occurred, each command trying to get to the top of the ridge first. The rebels were indeed retreating into a thicket behind the ridge. They went less than half a mile, however, and then made another stand, this time on the upper side of a mountain stream, — the very stream at which Larry and his companions had stopped after the escape from the caves under the mountain.

To ford the stream would have been an easy matter under ordinary circumstances, but with the rebels guarding the upper bank, it was extremely hazardous, and the regiment came to a halt on the edge of the brush overhanging the water.

"They are straight ahead, boys," said Major Morris, after his scouts had reported to him. "We will make a detour to the right. Forward, and on the double-quick!"

Every soldier felt that delay would mean a serious loss, and a rapid rush was made through the jungle to a point where the stream became rocky and winding. Here an excellent ford was found, and they went over in column of fours. They could now enfilade the rebels' position, and this they did so disastrously that the Filipinos speedily threw down a large part of their arms and fled helter-skelter into the mountain fastnesses still further to the northward.

The battle over, the battalion came to rest under the shade of the trees lining the stream, many of the soldiers throwing themselves down in a state bordering upon exhaustion, for the humidity in the air told upon them greatly. There was not a breath of a breeze, and the water hardly quenched the thirst that raged within them. As Major Morris declared, 'It was the primest place to catch a fever in' he had ever seen.

Ben was sitting at the foot of a tall tree talking to Gilmore, when he saw the advance guards bringing in two Americans, one evidently a sailor. At once he sprang to meet the sailor, thinking the man might know something about Larry.

The two men proved to be Dan Leroy and Boxer, the scout, and when he mentioned his brother's name to them, both were of course astonished.

"Do we know him!" cried Leroy. "Sure and didn't he and I run away together from the rebels, and Boxer, here, helping us to get out of the prison caves. Yes, yes, I know Larry well." And then Leroy told of the escape from the caves, and of how all three of the party had become lost in the swamp lands.

"We were in the swamps two days, and thought we would never get out," he continued. "Luckily, we had some caribao meat with us; otherwise we should have starved to death. The swamps were full of mosquitoes and lizards and lots of other things, and we were almost eaten up alive, eh, Boxer?"

"So we were," replied the scout.

"But what of my brother?" asked Ben, impatiently.

At this the faces of both of the men fell.

"We can't say what became o' him," said the sailor from the *Yorktown*. "You see, after we got out of the swamp, we determined to stick to

the high ground until we found a regular trail leading to the south. Well, our walk took us up to a high cliff overlooking a gorge filled with trees and bushes. We were walking ahead, with Larry at our heels, as we thought, when Boxer chanced to look around, and the boy was gone."

"Gone!" gasped Ben, in horror.

"Yes, gone! We couldn't understand it, and called to him, but he didn't answer. Then we went back about quarter of a mile, past the spot where we had seen him last, and fired the pistol as a signal. But he had disappeared totally, and we couldn't find hide nor hair o' him, try our level best."

The confession was a sickening one, and for several minutes Ben could not trust himself to speak.

"And — and what do you think became of my brother?" he asked, at length.

Both men shrugged their shoulders. "I'm afraid he fell over the cliff," said Boxer. "You see, the footpath was narrow and mighty slippery in spots."

At once Ben's mind went back to that scene in far-away Cuba, when Gerald Holgait had fallen over a cliff. Had a similar fate overtaken his

brother? and if so, was he still alive or had he been dashed to his death?

"How far is that spot from here?" he demanded abruptly.

"Not over a mile, cap'n," answered Boxer.

"I see you are a scout. Can you take me to the place?"

"Certainly — but — but — it's mighty risky, cap'n — so many rebs lurking about."

"Never mind — I must find Larry, alive or dead. Take me to him, and I'll pay you well for your services."

"I ain't asking a cent, cap'n — that ain't my style."

"Then you will take me?"

"I will," said Boxer, promptly. "Only I'll have to report first and get official permission."

"Major Morris will arrange that for you, I feel certain," answered Ben, turning to the major, who sat near, drinking in the conversation.

"Yes, I'll arrange that," said the major. "But I don't see how I am going to do without you, captain."

"Would you keep me from looking for my brother?"

"No, no, go ahead, and Gilmore can take the company."

So it was arranged; and inside of quarter of an hour Ben and Boxer were ready to depart.

"Captain, can't I go with ye?" It was Luke Striker who asked the question. The anxious look on his face spoke more eloquently than words, and Ben consented without argument.

And so the three set off on the search for Larry, little dreaming of the strange happenings in store for them.

CHAPTER XXIX

LARRY IS SENTENCED TO BE SHOT

To go back to Larry, at the time mentioned by Dan Leroy, when the boy had been following the old sailor and the scout along the cliff overlooking the valley in which both the Filipino and the American troops were encamped.

The adventures in the swamp had been exceedingly tiring, and the youth could scarcely drag one foot after the other, as the party of three hurried along over rocks and through thickets which at certain points seemed almost impassible.

"O dear! I'll be glad when this day's tramp comes to an end," he thought. "I wonder how far the American camp is from here?"

He tried to look across the valley, but there was a bluish vapor hanging over trees and brush which shut off a larger portion of the view. The party had been walking over a trail which now brought them directly to the edge of the cliff. Here the

Down went the sapling over the edge of the cliff. — *Page 281.*

footpath was scarcely two feet wide, and was backed up by high rocks and thorn bushes, around which it was difficult to climb without injury.

The men were as tired as the boy, and it must be confessed that for a half hour or more they paid little attention to Larry. Gradually the youth lagged behind, until those ahead were lost to view around a sharp turn of the cliff.

And it was then that an accident happened which put Larry in great peril all in an instant. In trying to make the turn, the boy got hold of a slender tree by which to support himself. Leroy and Boxer had grasped the same tree, and their swinging around had loosened its frail hold on the rocks, and as Larry grasped it, down went the sapling over the edge of the cliff, carrying the youth with it.

The boy had no time to cry out, and he clung fast, not knowing what else to do, until the tree landed with a mighty crash on the top of another tree at the foot of the cliff. The sudden stoppage caused Larry to loose his hold, and he bumped from limb to limb in the tree below until he struck the ground with a dull thud; and then for the time being he knew no more.

When the boy came to his senses, he found it was night and pitch dark under the thick tree, through the branches of which he had fallen. He rested on a bed of soft moss, and this cushionlike substance had most likely saved him from fatal injury.

His first feeling was one of bewilderment, his next that his left foot felt as if it was on fire, with a shooting pain that ran well up to his knee. Catching hold of the foot, he felt that the ankle was much swollen, and that his shoe-top was ready to burst with the pressure. Scarcely realizing what he was doing, he loosened the shoe, at which part of the pain left him.

"I suppose I ought to be thankful that I wasn't killed," he thought, rather dismally. "I wonder where Leroy and that scout are? I don't suppose it will do any good to call for them. The top of that cliff must be a hundred feet from here."

The fall had almost finished what was left of Larry's already ragged suit, and he found himself scratched in a dozen places, with a bad cut over one eye and several splinters in his left hand. Feeling in his pocket, he found several matches which Leroy had given him on leaving the prison cave,

and he lit one of these and set fire to a few dried leaves which happened to be ready to hand.

The light afforded a little consolation, and by its rays the boy made out a pool of water not far off, and to this he dragged himself, to get a drink and then bathe the ankle. This member of his body had been so badly wrenched that standing upon it was out of the question, as he speedily discovered by a trial which made him scream with pain.

"I'm in for it now," he thought. "With such an ankle as this, I can't go on, and what am I to do here, alone in the woods and with absolutely nothing to eat? I'd be better off in a Filipino prison."

Slowly the night wore along, until a faint light in the east announced the coming of day. During the darkness the jungle had been almost silent, but now the birds began to tune up, and here and there Larry heard the movements of small animals, although none of the latter showed themselves.

It was more pleasant under the big tree than down by the pool, and as daylight came on, Larry dragged himself back to his first resting-place. As he came up to the tree he saw a broken branch resting there and on it a bird's nest containing half a dozen speckled eggs.

"Here's a little luck, anyway," he murmured, and taking some of the tree limbs, he made a fire and cooked the eggs in the hot ashes. When they were done, he broke off the shells and ate the eggs, and although the flavor was by no means to be prized, yet they did much toward relieving the hunger he had felt before taking the fall over the cliff.

The day that followed was one which Larry says he will never forget, and for good reason. Neither human being nor beast came near him, and even the birds flying overhead seemed to give him a wide berth. Time and again he cried out, but the only answer that came back was the echo from the cliff, repeating his own words as if in mockery. Occasionally he heard firing at a great distance, but toward nightfall even this died out. He could scarcely move from his resting-place, and it was not until darkness came on that the pain in his ankle subsided sufficiently to allow of his sleeping in comfort.

The long sleep did the boy a world of good, and when he awakened he found the swelling in his ankle gone down, along with much of the pain, and on getting up he found that he could walk, but it must be slowly and with care. He was again

hungry, and his first effort was to supply himself with something to eat.

To bring down even a small animal was out of the question, but he thought he might possibly knock over a bird or two, and with this in view cut himself several short, heavy sticks. The birds were coming down to the pool to drink, and watching his chance he let fly with the sticks and managed to bring down two of the creatures, and these formed the sum total of his breakfast, although he could have eaten twice as many. There were a number of berries to hand, but these he refrained from touching, fearing they might be poisonous.

Larry felt he must now go on. To gain the top of the cliff was out of the question, so he decided to strike out directly for the southwest, feeling that this must sooner or later bring him into the American lines. To be sure, he had first to pass the Filipinos, but this could not be helped, and he felt that the best he could do would be to keep his eyes and ears open and walk around any body of the enemy that he might discover, instead of trying to steal his way straight through. This would require many miles of walking, and on the sore foot, too, but this hardship would have to be endured.

Half a mile was covered in a slow and painful fashion, when Larry reached a small clearing, and here he sat down to rest on a fallen tree and to examine the ankle, which he was afraid was again swelling. He was engaged in looking at the wounded member, when a rough Tagalog voice broke upon his ears.

"What do you here?" demanded a heavy-set native, in his own tongue, as he strode forward, gun in hand, followed by several others.

Larry was startled and leaped up. In a twinkling he found himself surrounded, and several Mausers were levelled at his head.

To resist would have been the height of foolishness, and Larry did not try. The Tagals asked him a number of questions in their own tongue, but he shook his head to show them that he did not understand. On their part, not one could speak English, so neither party could communicate with the other.

The natives, however, soon understood that he was alone, and when he pointed to his ankle and limped, also understood that he had sprained that member. One went into the bushes, and presently returned with some leaves, which he crushed and packed inside of the boy's stocking. The juice of

the leaves proved very cooling, and presently much of the pain from the sprain went away.

The Tagals were bound for the cliff, but by a route different from that which Larry had travelled. As the boy was unarmed and could scarcely hobble along, they did not take the trouble to bind him in any way. He was made to march with half of the crowd before him and the others behind; and thus they proceeded until the cliff was reached, at a point where the jungle hid a series of rough steps leading to the top. Beyond the top of these steps was a mountain trail, which by nightfall brought them to a plateau where were encamped at least three hundred Filipinos of all classes, the Tagals predominating.

A shout went up as Larry appeared, and he was at once recognized as one of the prisoners who had escaped from the caves, which were fully four miles away.

"So they have caught you again?" remarked an under-officer, as he strode up with a sinister smile on his swarthy countenance. "You did not get very far."

"No, I had a bad fall and lamed my foot," replied Larry, as cheerfully as he could. He was never one to "cry over spilt milk."

"A fall? Where?"

"I fell over the high cliff just below here."

"And you live to tell it? Impossible!"

"No, it is true. I fell into a large tree, and that broke my fall. But I was badly scratched up, and my ankle was sprained."

"A rare fall truly, boy. It would have been better, though, if you had been killed."

"Thank you; I like that!"

"I say it because you are a prisoner who has tried to escape from us. Do you know the fate of all such?"

At these words Larry could not help but shiver. He knew what the officer up at the cave prison had said, — that any prisoner trying to escape would be shot at the first opportunity which presented itself.

"Surely, you would not kill me for trying to get away?" he cried quickly.

The under-officer shrugged his shoulders. "It is not for me to change our regulations of war, boy. Your words prove that you knew beforehand the risk you were running."

"Yes, yes — but — You would try to get away, too, if our soldiers caught you."

"Possibly — I understand you treat your prisoners very badly."

"Our prisoners are treated as well as yours. And we would not kill a Filipino for having tried to escape, — unless, of course, he was shot in the attempt."

"It is you who say that — I have heard vastly different stories; how our men were starved and shot down without mercy, — not one man, but hundreds of them. I have it from friends in Manila that your General Otis is a monster who would rather kill than save at any time."

"Your friends have told you that which is not true!" exclaimed Larry, warmly. "If anything, General Otis is too kind-hearted, especially with those who have done their best to put the city in a state of rebellion and those who have tried to burn it to the ground. I suppose your friends had a purpose in telling you what was not true."

"I take my friends' words in preference to yours, boy," was the angry answer. "Who are you that come to take our country away from us — the country that we tried so hard to liberate from the iron grasp of Spain? The land is ours, and no Americans shall govern us. We will fight to the

last, — from the cities to the towns, and from the towns to the villages, and then to the mountains, from one island to another, — and you shall never conquer us, no matter how large an army you send from across the ocean. But, bah, I am talking to a mere boy, when I might have better sense." And turning on his heel the under-officer strode away, out of humor with himself as well as with Larry.

The youth felt utterly crushed, and sitting down on a rock, with a heart as heavy as lead, he wondered what was going to happen next. Would they really shoot him? The thought was agony itself.

There were no other prisoners in the camp, so he was left for a long time alone, although several soldiers kept their eyes upon him, that he might not wander away. Soon supper was served, and one of the Tagals brought him a bowl of rice and meat. It must be confessed that he was now tremendously hungry, and ate all of what was given him, despite his down-heartedness.

The meal finished, the Filipinos were sitting around their camp-fires, when a certain General Drummo was announced. At once there was a

parade, which the general reviewed with satisfaction. The newcomer was served with supper, and then Larry was brought before him.

The general had his head full of his plans for the morrow and gave the boy but scant attention.

"You knew the risk you ran when you stole away," he said, in broken English. "It is true you are but a boy, yet I'll wager you can use a gun better than some of our own men. I cannot pardon you, for that would be setting a bad example. So I hereby sentence you to be shot at sunrise to-morrow, — and may your death be an example to others who are thinking of escape."

Before Larry could say a word, if indeed he wanted to speak, he was led away to a hollow back of the camp. Here he was tied fast to a tree, and two soldiers were detailed to guard him until the hour for his execution should arrive.

CHAPTER XXX

A RESCUE UNDER DIFFICULTIES

"NOTHING here, cap'n."

It was Boxer the scout who spoke. For two hours he, Ben, and Luke Striker had been examining the trail running along the cliff. They could find footprints without number, but no trace of Larry.

"He must have gone somewhere," replied Ben, who could not bring himself to give up the hunt. "He wasn't spirited away. I've a good mind to make a hunt at the bottom of the cliff."

"As you will, cap'n. But, remember, this air side o' the valley is full of rebs, and if they catch us —"

"We must be on our guard, Boxer."

"I've got my eyes wide open," put in Luke. "I reckon on it as how I can see as far as any on 'em, too."

The walk to the cliff had not been accomplished without difficulty. Twice had they come close to

running into the Filipino pickets, and once Luke had been almost certain they were being followed, but the alarm proved false. A night had been spent in the jungle, and at a point within half a mile of where Larry lay senseless under the big tree!

The hunt had revealed to the party the series of rough steps mentioned in the last chapter, and down these they now went and continued their search at the base of the cliff.

"What's this?" came from the old sailor, presently, and he pointed to the broken sapling hanging in the branches of the big tree. With the sapling was a shred of a garment, fluttering in the breeze like a signal of distress.

A close examination caused them to reach a conclusion which was, as we already know, true; namely, that Larry had come down with the sapling and landed in the big tree.

"And he wasn't killed, either," said Boxer. "For here is where he built a fire and cooked some birds' eggs."

"And he visited the pool, too," added Ben, examining the tracks with care. "Funny tracks these," he added, a second later.

"He was hopping on one foot," announced the

scout, gravely. "That looks as if he had one leg hurt."

It was an easy matter to follow the trail through the jungle, for the ground was damp and covered with a moss which was torn with ease. Soon they reached the clearing where Larry had stopped to examine his ankle.

"Hullo, more footprints!" ejaculated Boxer, his face falling. "And rebs, too, I'll wager a new hat. Cap'n, I'm afraid your brother has run into worse trouble."

"It certainly looks like it," answered Ben. "Where do the footprints lead to?"

Where but back to the very rocks down which they had come but a few hours before! Soon they were back at the top of the cliff again.

Before leaving the valley Boxer studied the footprints closely, and now, although there were other footprints above, he followed the party having Larry in charge without making a single error. But it was slow work, and the encampment of the Filipinos was not discovered until nightfall.

"We've tracked 'em to a finish," announced Boxer. "Don't go any further, cap'n — unless you are ready to do some tall shooting."

"I can do some shooting if it's necessary," answered Ben, with a determined look on his face which was not to be mistaken. "I should like to make sure my brother is here."

"We'll walk around the camp and see," said Boxer, and this they did, slowly and cautiously, each with his weapons ready for immediate use. But the Filipinos were busy eating their suppers and smoking cigarettes, and did not discover them.

"There's Larry!" cried Luke, after a while. And he pointed to one side of the camp. The guards were just taking the lad to the general to be sentenced.

"Yes, yes!" answered Ben. He handled his pistol nervously. He could hardly restrain himself from rushing forward and embracing the long lost. Boxer saw what was in his mind and held him back.

"Don't be rash, cap'n," whispered the scout. "If you are, it may cost all of us our lives."

"I will try to be careful," was the answer, with an effort. "But what are they going to do with him?"

"They are taking him over to yonder tent."

Soon Larry disappeared inside the tent, and

they crouched behind the bushes to await developments. While waiting, Ben made a mental calculation of the number of the enemy.

"A battalion, or more," he said to Boxer. "I wonder what they are doing so far from the main body of the troops?"

"Oh, their army is becoming badly scattered, cap'n. General Lawton has 'em on the run, and there won't be any of 'em left when he gets through with 'em."

As we know, the scene in the tent was a short one, and soon they saw Larry come out again, and saw him tied to the tree. The two soldiers detailed to guard him sat on either side of their prisoner, on rocks about six or eight yards from the tree.

"He seems to be the only prisoner in the camp," whispered Ben. "I wonder if I can't crawl up and cut him loose. I did that once for Gilbert Pennington."

"No, no!" interposed Boxer. "Those guards are wide awake and will shoot you in a minute. Wait till it gets darker — we may get a chance to do something then."

Slowly the minutes drifted by, Ben watching

Larry every instant. He saw that his younger brother was exceedingly tired and held one foot up as if in pain. The young sailor had asked if he might not lie down, but this comfort had been denied him.

Both of the guards were puffing vigorously on their cigarettes, when one chanced to throw down a lighted match close to the rock upon which he was sitting. It set fire to some dry grass, but instead of putting it out, the guard watched the tiny conflagration grow stronger.

"Playing with fire, eh?" said his mate, lightly.

"Yes," was the slow answer. "How I would like to see Manila go up like that!"

"Yes, I would like to see that, too, Carlos, and the Americans in the flames. Ah, but the day when we are to take the capital seems a long way off now."

"Never mind; Aguinaldo says he is soon to have reënforcements from the south. When they come, let the American dogs beware!"

The talk was carried on in the Tagalog dialect, so Larry understood not a word. In the meantime, the fire crept up, making the guard's seat anything but comfortable.

"That's too much," he observed, and was on the point of kicking the fire out with his foot, when of a sudden he uttered a wild yell that startled everybody near him. "A snake! a snake! Oh, what a long creature!"

For from under the rock a huge reptile had glided, roused up by the heat. It was a snake peculiar to those mountains, and all of ten feet long and as thick as a man's arm. It struck the guard in the knee, and then whipped around in increased anger, for its tail had come in contact with the fire.

"A snake!" echoed the second guard, and fired his Mauser at the reptile. But he was too excited to shoot straight, and the bullet glanced along the rock and struck the first guard in the cheek, inflicting a fairly serious wound.

The cries of the two guards were taken up on all sides of the camp, and especially in the vicinity of the rock from under which the reptile had appeared. All the soldiers recognized the snake as a dangerous enemy; and as the reptile moved about, first one and then another ran to get out of its way, several in the meantime taking hasty shots at it, but failing to do any serious damage.

For several minutes the prisoner was entirely forgotten.

It was Ben who saw the opportunity, — Ben and the ever-faithful Luke, — and rushing up, they cut Larry's bonds and fairly hustled him into the depth of the jungle behind the encampment. The young sailor could hardly understand what was taking place, but when he recognized his brother and his old messmate, he gave a shout of joy.

"You, Ben! and Luke! Oh, I must be dreaming!"

"No, you are not dreaming, Larry. We've been watching you for a long while, trying to do something. Can you run?"

"No; I sprained my ankle, and it is still sore."

"I'll carry him," said Luke. "You lead the way, cap'n. And Boxer had better bring up the rear guard."

"Right you are," came from the scout. "Have your weapons ready, cap'n. We may catch it hot, in spite of the alarm over the snake. Those rebs will be as mad as hornets when they find the lad is missing."

Away they went, Ben trying to find an easy path, — which was no small thing to do in that

utter darkness, — and Luke coming up behind, breathing like a porpoise, but vowing he could carry Larry a mile were it necessary. Boxer kept as far to the rear as he dared without missing their trail, and the life of any Filipino who might have appeared would not have been worth a moment's purchase at the scout's hands.

They had covered but a few hundred yards when the shouting and firing at the encampment ceased. "I guess the snake is dead," said Ben. "Now they'll be after us."

The young captain was right; and soon they heard the enemy breaking through the jungle in detachments of three or four men each, all hot-footed to recapture the prisoner. They had observed the cut ropes and wondered if it was possible that Larry had severed them without assistance.

It was not long before Boxer got a good shot at the nearest of the pursuers. His aim was true, and the Tagal went down without so much as a groan. His companions stopped short, and then called some other soldiers to the scene. "The boy is armed and shoots like a sharpshooter," they told each other; and after that the search was con-

tinued with extra care. Of course Boxer kept out of sight; and as soon as he could, he joined Ben and the others.

"I think there must be a stream close at hand, — the one we crossed a few days ago," said he. "If we can get to that, we'll have some chance to hide."

"Let's get to it, then," gasped Luke, who felt that he could keep up but a short while longer.

"I'll take Larry, Luke," put in Ben, and the transfer was made, in spite of the old sailor's protests. Then Luke plunged ahead and soon announced that he could see the river through the bushes to the right. Soon they came out on some rocks. The stream was a mountain torrent, a rod wide and from two to three feet deep. They plunged in without delay.

As they could not walk against such a current, they followed the stream on its downward course almost to the edge of the cliff, where the torrent formed a pretty series of waterfalls. Then they crossed to the other side, and climbed into a tree growing directly at the water's edge, — a species of willow, with long, drooping branches.

"We ought to be safe here — at least for a while," said Boxer.

"It's hard to tell where one would be safe here," answered Ben. "The whole country seems to be invested with scattered bands of the insurgents."

He asked Larry about himself, and in a few words the younger brother told his story. Then Boxer stopped the talk.

"In a situation like this, it's best to have only ears and eyes," he said, and all saw at once the aptness of the remark.

But though they remained on guard the larger part of the night, nobody came to disturb them, and the only sound that broke the stillness was that of the water as it tumbled over the rocks below.

Ben was much worried over Larry's ankle, which had begun to swell again through having stood so long on it while being tied to the tree. He brought a canteen of water up from the stream and bathed it with this. This moistened the mashed-up leaves once more, and then the injured member felt better, and Larry caught a nap.

"I reckon we had better be moving again," said Boxer, while it wanted yet an hour to daylight. "Those rebs may be waiting for to see us, you know."

"Well, my brother can't run, so perhaps it will be

just as well if you take a scout around and see if the coast is clear," said Ben.

"Certainly, cap'n." And Boxer made off without delay, moving through the jungle and along the stream as silently as some wild animal in search of its prey.

Fifteen minutes and more passed, and they began to wonder when the scout would come back, when a low whistle reached their ears.

"It's all right," came from Boxer.

"Nobody in sight?" questioned Ben.

"Nary a reb, cap'n."

"I'm glad of it," put in Larry, with a sigh of relief. "I never want to fall in with them again!" And he shuddered. He would never forget how close he had been to death at their hands.

They came down the tree, and after a drink from the stream, set out again, this time following the watercourse over the rocks until the cliff was left behind. Here they struck a bit of marsh and had to make a detour, finally coming out, much to their surprise, on what appeared to be a regular highway through the forest.

"Now, if we only knew where this leads to," cried Ben.

"I reckon it leads to San Isidro," came from Boxer. "But we may be a good number of mil — "

"Look! look!" ejaculated Striker, pointing up the road. "The rebels, as sure as you air born! An' they air comin' about a thousand strong, too. Boys, we air lost!"

CHAPTER XXXI

THE FALL OF SAN ISIDRO — CONCLUSION

LUKE STRIKER was right; a large force of Filipinos were sweeping down the road at a rapid rate, bringing with them two old field-pieces and a rapid-firing gun. They were commanded by several officers on horseback, and presented a formidable appearance to the worn-out Americans.

"Out of sight, quick!" The cry came from Ben. "It's our only chance to escape."

The words had scarcely left his lips when the pop-pop of several Mausers was heard, as the Filipino sharpshooters, who were in advance of the main body, opened fire upon them. Their aim was excellent, and both Striker and Boxer were hit, although neither seriously.

"They've caught me!" ejaculated the old sailor, and staggered up against Ben. At the same time Boxer pitched headlong.

"Oh, Luke!" The call came from Larry, who

was limping painfully. "Where did they hit you? This is the worst of all!"

"I'm struck in the shoulder. But come, Ben is right. To the jungle!" And Striker clutched Larry's hand in a death-like grip, bound to live or die with his closest friend, as the case might be.

The pair started forward. Ben hesitated and looked at Boxer, and saw the latter try to stagger up once more. "He's not dead," thought the young captain, and picked the sharpshooter up. In a few seconds more the whole party were in the jungle again.

But the Filipinos were not going to let them escape thus easily, and coming up on the double-quick, a detachment began to search the bushes, at the same time calling on the Americans to surrender if they wanted to save their lives.

With Larry limping painfully, and both Luke and Boxer groaning in spite of their efforts to keep silent, the Americans looked about for some spot which might prove a safe hiding-place. But the ground here was level and the jungle rather spare, and for those who were wounded to climb trees was out of the question.

"We'll have to make a stand, I'm afraid," said

Ben, looking to his pistol to see if it was fully loaded. "They are coming — Hark!"

The young captain broke off short, as a loud shouting from the road interrupted him. Then came a volley of musketry, followed by a steady stream of shots.

"We've got them this time, boys!" came in a ringing, English-speaking voice. "Forward, and don't let a man of them escape. On to San Isidro!"

"Our troops!" cried Larry. "Oh, God be praised that they are coming this way!"

"Yes, yes, our troops!" ejaculated Ben. "And what is more, my regiment!" The revulsion of feeling was so great that he felt like dancing a jig.

The shouting and firing now increased, until it was almost upon them. Then followed a rush into the woods, and the little party found itself face to face with a score of Filipinos.

At first our friends were greatly alarmed, and Ben and Larry did their best to defend themselves by firing as rapidly as possible at the Tagals as they appeared. But the enemy was retreating, and gave the little party scant attention. Then

came a yell close at hand, and in a few seconds a squad of American soldiers burst through the thicket.

"Dan Casey!" cried Ben, as he recognized the Irish volunteer.

"Sure, an' is it Captain Russell?" came from the soldier, joyfully. "It is, the saints be praised! We've been a-wonderin' what had become of yez!"

"Town mit dem Filibinos!" The call came from Carl Stummer, and soon he also put in an appearance. "Dis vos von lucky tay," he said, when he saw the party. "Ve haf dem repels on der run like neffer vos."

"Then send them a-flying, Stummer," answered Ben. "Where is our camp?"

"Pack dere apout half a mile. Ve vos move up las' night und steal von march on dem Filibinos."

There was no time to say more, excepting to stop several of the soldiers, and assisted by these, the whole party moved to the rear, through line after line of American troops now hurrying to the firing line, for it was General Lawton's plan to give the Filipinos no rest until San Isidro and the territory in its vicinity were captured.

Inside of half an hour, Ben had seen to it that Larry, Luke, and Boxer were all made comfortable, and then, hastily swallowing a bowl of coffee and some bread and meat, he hurried after his command, which was threshing the jungle just outside of San Isidro for scattered bands of the enemy such as the young captain and his party had met. Soon Ben was on the firing line once more, and warmly greeted by Major Morris, Gilmore, and his other friends.

The fighting was hot, for the rebels felt that if San Isidro was taken, nothing would remain to them but the mountains. They had constructed a high embankment just outside of their capital, and this they were defending vigorously, many of their leading generals being at the front to direct the movements.

But General Lawton was now in his element, and feeling that his troops would do whatever he asked of them, he began to spread out to the right and the left, thus enfilading the trenches behind the embankment, which presently became so uncomfortable that the rebels had to leave them. At the same time a centre column continued the attack from the front — a centre column composed

principally of Minnesota troops and the regiment to which Ben belonged.

"They are leaving the trenches!" exclaimed Major Morris, who was watching the progress of the battle through a field-glass. "Forward, boys! They are on the run again!"

A rattle of rifle-shots followed, and the battalion carried the middle of the embankment with a wild rush, planting Old Glory on the very top a minute later. Then the regiment pushed on for San Isidro proper. A hot skirmish was had on the main street of the town; but the Filipinos had had enough of it, and by nightfall were making for the mountains as rapidly as their demoralized condition would permit.

Señor Romano had told Ben where Benedicto Lupez and his brother José had been stopping in San Isidro, and as soon as the young captain could get the opportunity he hurried around to the place, which was a large private boarding-house.

"There is a man here by the name of Lupez, I believe," he said, as he presented himself, followed by a detachment of half a dozen of his men.

The boarding-house keeper, who had just hung

out a white flag, eyed him suspiciously. "How do you know that Señor Lupez is here?" he questioned slowly.

"I know it, and I want to see him at once," returned Ben, sharply.

"He is — is not here — he — he went away this morning," came with much hesitation.

"Don't ye believe him, captain," put in Dan Casey, who was in the detachment.

"I will search the house," said Ben, quietly.

The keeper of the boarding-place protested, but his protest was of no avail. The house was searched from top to bottom, and in a back wing they found Benedicto Lupez in bed, suffering from a badly injured leg, the result of trying to ride a half-broken horse which the insurgents had captured from the Americans. He greeted the visitors with a villanous scowl.

At first he tried to deny his identity, but the Americans had been furnished with his photograph, and a wart on his forehead proved a clew that was conclusive. At once his effects were searched, and under his pillow was found a leather bag containing fifty thousand dollars in gold and in American bank bills.

"This is the money you stole from Braxton Bogg," said Ben, severely. "You need not deny it. Where is the rest?"

At first Benedicto Lupez refused to talk, but with a long term in an American prison in Manila staring him in the face, he confessed that just previous to the fall of San Isidro, he had divided what was left of the money with his brother José, who had now left for parts unknown. This confession was afterward proved to be true, and, later on, Ben learned that with five thousand dollars of the stolen funds José Lupez had purchased himself a general's commission in the insurgent army.

"Well, I suppose we are lucky to get back the fifty thousand dollars," said Ben, when he was telling Larry of how he had found Benedicto Lupez. "A half-loaf is far better than no bread at all, you know."

"Yes," answered the young sailor. "And who knows but that we may run across this José Lupez some day, and get the balance? Anyway, the recovery of that fifty thousand dollars means at least eight or ten thousand dollars in our pockets, as well as something for Uncle Job. I'll

wager uncle and Walter will be mighty glad to get the good news we have to send them." And then he added enthusiastically, which was just like Larry, "Hurrah, Ben, score one more victory for Young America and Old Glory!"

Here we must bring to a close the adventures of Ben and Larry Russell previous to and during "The Campaign of the Jungle" under gallant General Lawton. The campaign had lasted three weeks, and during that time the troops had covered about a hundred and fifty miles of territory, fought twenty-two battles, captured twenty-eight towns, and destroyed large quantities of army stores, including three hundred thousand bushels of rice. The losses to the Americans had been about fifty killed and wounded, while the losses to the Filipinos were nearly ten times as great!

With the fall of San Isidro, General Aguinaldo and his followers retreated to the mountains, twelve miles to the north of that town. At the same time the rebels who had been opposing General MacArthur's advance fell back to Tarlac, thirty miles beyond San Fernando. But the Americans had not sufficient troops at hand with which to

garrison the many towns they had taken, and so it was not long before some of the rebels came back to one place and another, to take what they could get, and to harass those natives who had been friendly to our soldiers. In the meantime the rainy season put a stop to further activity on a large scale, and while the Filipinos sued again for peace (but upon their own terms), General Otis sent for additional troops, so that the next dry season might see the rebellion brought to such a finish that its resurrection would be an impossibility. Many Americans pitied the sad condition of the Tagalogs, but all felt that as matters were now situated the supremacy of the United States throughout the Philippines must be maintained. Once the insurgents submitted to American authority, we would do the very best we could by them.

Shortly after the fall of San Isidro, General Lawton's command marched to join that of General MacArthur. In the meantime Larry and his wounded friends were removed to the hospital at Manila, whither Gilbert Pennington had already been taken, along with many others. Here the sick were given every attention, and soon the

majority of our friends were on a speedy road to health.

Ben felt that there was no need to write to Walter, as his brother would ere long be in the Philippines, but he wrote to his Uncle Job, telling about the capture of Benedicto Lupez, and adding that the prisoner had been sent to join Braxton Bogg, and that the recovered money was safe in the United States bank at Manila, waiting to be returned to Buffalo. He also told about Larry, and added that since the *Olympia* had sailed away without him, the young sailor was now going to throw in his fortunes with the soldiers.

The letter brought great joy to Job Dowling, and he immediately wrote back, stating how pleased he was, and adding that he hoped Ben would catch José Lupez and recover what was still missing.

"That is easier said than done," said Ben to Larry, as the pair read the letter together. "Still, if this José Lupez is now a general in the rebel army, we may meet some day." Strange as it may seem, that day was not far off, as will be related in a sixth and concluding volume of this series, in which we shall meet all the Russell boys, as well as Gilbert, Luke, and many of our other friends

again, and see what each did toward carrying our flag to a final and lasting victory in the Philippines.

But now let us leave Ben and Larry, and also the others. All had done well and richly deserved the rest that came to them. Many adventures were still in store for them, but it is doubtful if any were to be more thrilling than those encountered during "The Campaign of the Jungle."